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Romantic MAGAZINE

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REAL LIFE STORIES

10¢

A Teacher Confesses

I WANTED MY FLING

KISSES FOR REVENGE

Complete Short Novel

Lovely Olivia de Havilland sets her table—

Photographed in the Hollywood Home of
OLIVIA DE HAVILLAND
STAR OF
"THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD"
A Warner Bros. Picture

—with the new SURF CLUB DESIGN...

You can share with this starry lady the charm of the silverware on her table. Just now, your dealer is featuring the SEABRIGHT SET—a 50-piece Service for 8, in SURF CLUB (or three other exquisite designs). With the Quantity Saving of $6.25, you can own this Service for only $24.95. And, in addition, you receive a handsome $5.00 value Tarnish-Proof Wood Chest and a beautiful Serving or Cold Meat Fork, to match your chosen design—FREE. Ask your dealer to show you this unusual SEABRIGHT SET.

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TO INTRODUCE
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This
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. . . AND MEN CAN BE SUCH AWFUL GOSSIPS TOO!

Let's face the truth about UNDERARM PERSPIRATION ODOR

MEN DO TALK about girls behind their backs—although they won't admit it. Is a girl pretty, a good sport, a smooth dancer? The answer quickly goes the rounds!

They talk about other things, too. About the girls they hate to dance with —the girls they simply *won't* take out. For a girl must be *more* than pretty and smart. She'll never make a hit with men unless she is truly *sweet*—nice to be *near*.

Unpopularity often begins with the first hint of underarm odor. This is one fault that men can't stand — one fault they *can't* forgive. Yet any girl may offend this way, if she trusts her *bath alone* to keep her fresh!

Smart girls—popular girls—don't take chances! They know a bath only takes care of *past perspiration*—that they still need Mum, to prevent odor *to come*.

MUM LASTS ALL DAY! All day or all evening long, Mum's protection is *sure*.

MUM IS SAFE! Mum does not stop healthful perspiration. Even after underarm shaving it never irritates the skin. And Mum is completely harmless to fabrics—safe to apply even *after* you're dressed.

MUM IS QUICK! One half minute is all it takes for a dab of Mum under each arm! To be a girl men *like* to have around, use Mum every day and after every bath.

FOR THIS IMPORTANT USE, TOO

Thousands of women use Mum for Sanitary Napkins because they know Mum is so gentle, so sure! Don't risk embarrassment! Always use Mum!

HOURS AFTER YOUR BATH MUM STILL KEEPS YOU SWEET

MUM TAKES THE ODOR OUT OF PERSPIRATION

Posed by Robert Taylor and Maureen O'Sullivan

Vol. IX No. 52

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Complete Short Novel

KISSES FOR REVENGE - - -

Keep young

and Doubly Lovely with refreshing Double Mint gum

Easy to do . . just read below

WHENEVER you enjoy healthful, delicious Double Mint gum, the gentle natural chewing exercise stimulates sleepy face muscles, relaxes tense lines and brightens your teeth. This all helps to keep your face young and attractive, your smile more winning. And now, presented here is this youthfully lovely new scarf dress just created for you in Paris by the great Schiaparelli and made available by Double Mint gum in a Simplicity pattern. In this way Double Mint gum helps you look as smart, streamlined and charming as Hollywood's beautiful star, Anita Louise, *left*, of famed Warner Bros.' Pictures, who is modeling this dress . . . So you see how simple and easy it is to keep young and doubly lovely with Double Mint gum. Enjoy it daily. Begin today.

Millions of women daily buy this popular double-lasting mint-flavored gum. Beauty specialists everywhere recommend it. It is non-fattening, aids digestion and sweetens your breath . . . Daily chew Double Mint gum to keep young and lovely. Buy several packages today.

Picture yourself in this new **SCHIAPARELLI** *Double Mint gum scarf dress from Paris, modeled for you in Hollywood by the ever doubly lovely star,* **ANITA LOUISE** *of Warner Bros., whose next picture is* **"THE SISTERS."** *Made available to you by Double Mint gum in* **SIMPLICITY** *Pattern 2740. At nearly all good Department, Dry Goods or Variety stores you can buy this pattern.* Or, write *Double Mint Dress Pattern Dept., 419 Fourth Ave., New York City.*

S-96

How Schiaparelli Double Mint dress ties scarf as apron.

Take apron off dress and use as handy platochek.

When in need of a bag, knot scarf-apron thusly.

More Double duty! *This is a* Double Mint dress.

Hooray for Hamburger!

The whole family will cheer for individual stuffed meat loaves.

BY MRS. CHRISTINE FREDERICK
HOUSEHOLD EDITOR

GETTING your money's worth in meats these days is indeed a problem sufficient to bring wrinkles to the most attractive young forehead. If your family is numerous and hearty, what meat can be bought with economy that will satisfy such generous appetites? Or, if yours be only a two-some, it seems even more difficult to purchase a small amount of meat which will still be as choice and delicious as the large prime cuts of leg and loin.

In either dilemma, hamburger is your answer! Cast hamburger in your monthly Food Horoscope, and find tastiness, economy, and variety in every weekly segment!

It truly seems to me that you get more for your money in hamburger than from any other meat purchase. That is because the genuine hamburger is made from freshly ground first-class beef, prepared by the butcher before your very eyes. Ask him for a pound of top or lower round, or for the same weight from the sirloin of beef. Request that he trim off all fat and sinews, and that it be twice ground through his meat grinder. The result of this care will be hamburger: fresh, choice beef or steak, finely and uniformly minced, and without fat. Never, never, no matter what your dealer suggests, buy the pre-ground "chopped meat" exposed in a mass in his counter case.

Starting with this initial pound of freshly minced beef, what dishes can be "cast" in our Food Horoscope?

Irene Bentley, screen player, grinds her own for Mrs. Frederick's recipes.

To begin with, here is a simple rule of seasonings, suitable for most hamburger dishes:

To one pound of hamburger allow:

1 teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper
1 tablespoon onion juice
1 beaten egg

In a sizeable bowl, mix these ingredients *with the hands* or with a stout kitchen fork, and whip them smooth into a well-blended mass. One of the chief faults in preparing this so simple dish seems to be failure to blend seasonings with meat, and failure to whip or stir the meat so that its consistency becomes desirably soft. The most delicious savory hamburger I've always remembered vividly was eaten in Holland, and the consistency of these cakes was almost like mashed potatoes. It is this soft blended texture which characterizes the ideal meat ball.

And now for its cooking. If we think of hamburger as chopped steak, then we cook it exactly as steak—that is, on a sizzling hot skillet with little or no grease. Thus, we use the short, quick, and high-temperature method of the "broil" or the "pan-fry," so associated with steak cookery.

On the other hand, if we think of hamburger as meat together with other ingredients in a whole mass, then we may simmer or give slow cookery technique to the various meat ball dishes. But in either case, we watch temperature closely, and that goes for the temperature of the serving platter also—for if there's anything which gives away the second-class cook, it is the poor habit of laying sizzling meats on lukewarm plates!

Cookery Secrets

SO HERE'S how on hamburgers. The first special recipe features simple hamburger, made up, however, of three meats and cooked in a single large cake or loaf in a skillet. I would like to add to it a side dish of browned sliced onions, but here it is as I originally secured it from a noted explorer-photographer:

[*Please turn to page* 72]

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Use This Antiseptic Scalp Treatment

Skin specialists generally agree that effective treatment must include (1) regular cleansing of scalp; (2) killing germs that spread infection; (3) stimulating circulation of the scalp; (4) lubrication of the scalp to prevent dryness.

To Accomplish This Is Easy With The Zonite Antiseptic Treatment

Just add 2 tablespoons of Zonite to each quart of water in basin . . . Then do this:—

1. Massage head for 3 minutes with this Zonite solution. *(This gives hair and scalp an antiseptic cleansing—stimulates scalp—kills all germs at contact.)*
2. Lather head with any good soap shampoo, using same Zonite solution. *(This cuts oil and grease in hair and scalp—loosens dirt and dandruff scales.)*
3. Rinse very thoroughly. *(Your head is now clean—your scalp free from scales.)*
4. If scalp is dry, massage in any preferred scalp oil. *(This relieves dryness.)*

RESULTS: By using this simple antiseptic shampoo treatment regularly (twice every week at first) you do what skin specialists say is necessary, if you want to rid yourself of dandruff itch and nasty scalp odors. We believe that if you are faithful, you will be delighted with results.

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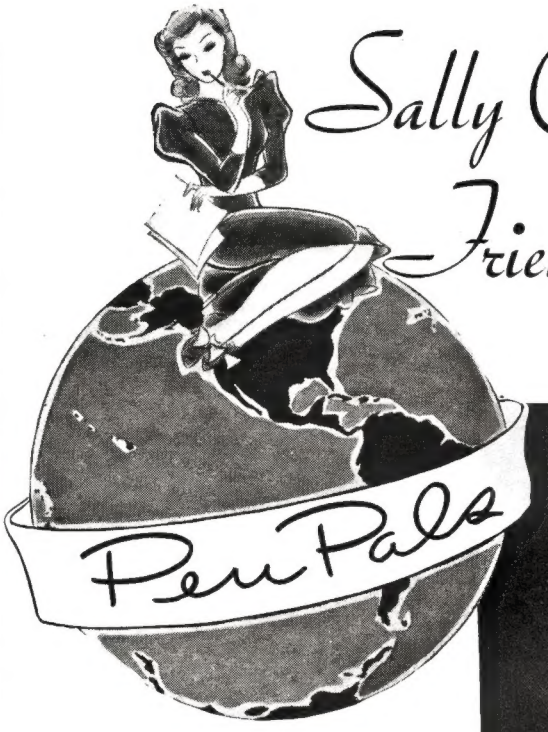
Sally O'Day's Friendship Club



A free lance photographer I AM a young man of twenty-nine. I am a free lance photographer with plenty of time to write and plenty of snapshots to send you. I would like to hear from pals of all ages from anywhere in this old world.

Blackie, Pennsylvania

Friends needed I AM a lonely widow, practical nurse, and lover of all sports. I am blonde, age fifty, and will always find time to write to those who would like to correspond with me.

V. L., Illinois

She wants to be an aviatrix ALL lonely boys and girls, please write to a fun-loving girl of twenty whose pet ambitions are to learn some day to pilot an airplane, sail a boat, and travel the world over. I love all sports and am a rabid movie fan. Will promise to answer all letters—from Eskimo maids to Zulu belles.

Gerry, Illinois

Two missionary Evangelists MY daughter and I are missionary Evangelists and although we are constantly meeting new people in new places, we would like to meet or correspond with folks from other states and countries who are interested in the same kind of work, or from anyone who thinks our work is interesting. My daughter is eighteen and I am forty-six. We will write to all who answer this plea, especially shut-ins.

Gert, Illinois

She collects dogs WON'T someone have a big heart and write to a lonely Texas girl, nineteen years of age, who likes swing music and dancing, and whose pet hobby is collecting all kinds of dogs? I also collect match folders. I promise to answer every letter, so start writing, Pen Pals!

Mari, Texas

A college heard from I AM a college girl of nineteen, tall and blonde. When my studies become boring, I like to turn to new interests, and correspondence is a fine one. I am sure I could write interesting letters to all who care to write to me. College life is not so dull, you know.

Marge, Ohio

She's a dancer I AM a dancer who has traveled through most of the states. I enjoy all good sports and good music. I am a brunette of nineteen, and at the present time very lonesome. Won't someone who feels the way I do, write to me? I will answer all letters and exchange photos.

Bunnie, Virginia

Accept No Substitutes! Always Insist on the Advertised Brand!

A nurse wants pen pals

I'M a nurse, twenty years old, have brown hair and eyes. I like outdoor sports, especially horseback riding. I would like to hear from boys and girls about my age and will be glad to exchange snaps. I'm a long way from home and have no friends in the city where I work, so come on and cheer me up!

Skippy, Maryland

Disappointed in love

I AM a lonely girl of twenty-three who has been disappointed in love. Come on, boys and girls, please write! I'll answer your letters promptly. I don't smoke or drink, but I like good, clean fun.

Lonely Jean, New York

Give her a break, pals

MY MOTHER died when I was eight years old, and since that time I have taken care of my father who is an invalid. I also take care of a brother, a niece, and a nephew. As I have to stay at home most of the time, I have few friends. Won't some of you please write to me and help make my days a little shorter and less tedious? I'll answer all letters. Here's hoping my mail box is kept filled.

E. B. B., Alabama

India calling!

HI! Boys and girls from everywhere! Would you care to write to two lonely girls of twenty-one and twenty-four, both not bad to look at? We would like to hear from pen pals between the ages of twenty-four and thirty-five. We promise to reply to every letter, so come on and write us.

Babs and Trudy, India

Lover of music and poetry

I AM a girl of twenty-two with blue eyes and dark brown hair. I enjoy writing to people from other states and will welcome anybody who wishes to write. I love

[*Please turn to page* 13]

RULES FOR JOINING THE FRIENDSHIP CLUB

1. Letters of pals must contain a three-cent stamp for postage and ten cents to cover clerical costs. There is no charge for publishing a letter.
2. Addresses of pals cannot be given out. The first letter must go through the Club. After that, correspondence between pals is direct.
3. Make your letters interesting, so that the pen pals to whom you write will be anxious to correspond with you. Although it is seldom that a pen pal does not answer the letters he or she receives, I cannot guarantee a reply. I can only assume the responsibility of passing your letter on.
4. Please do not ask me to enter into personal correspondence with you as that is impossible.
5. Address your letters to SALLY O'DAY'S FRIENDSHIP CLUB, ROMANTIC MAGAZINE, Fawcett Bldg., Greenwich, Conn.

Sincerely yours,
SALLY O'DAY.

MARVELOUS FOR COMPLEXIONS, TOO!

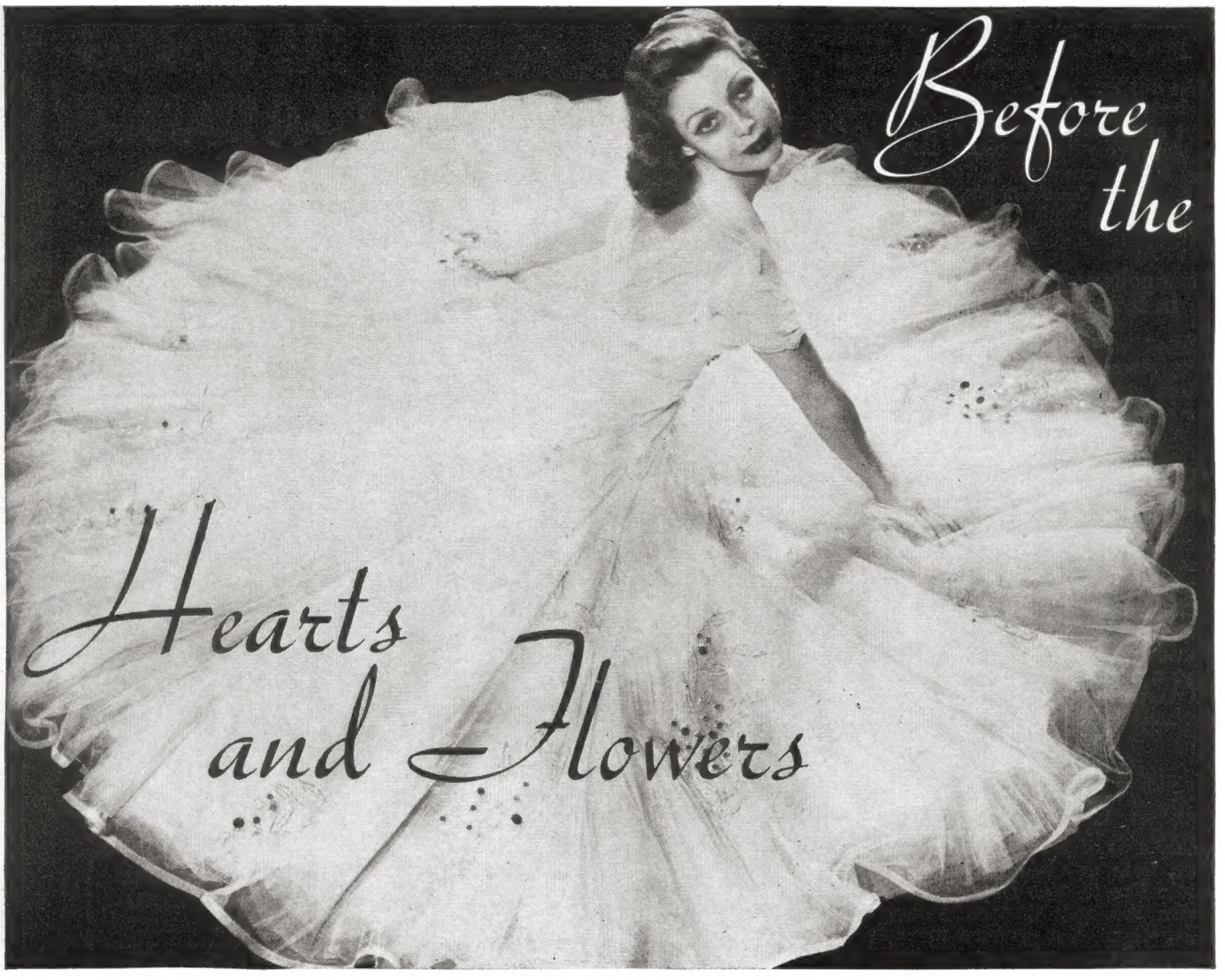
You'll want to use this pure, creamy-white soap for both face and bath.

Cashmere Bouquet's lather is so gentle and caressing. Yet it removes dirt and cosmetics so thoroughly, leaving your skin clearer, softer... more radiant and alluring!

NOW ONLY 10¢
at drug, department, ten-cent stores

TO KEEP FRAGRANTLY DAINTY—BATHE WITH PERFUMED

CASHMERE BOUQUET SOAP



Posed by Loretta Young

THOUSANDS of years ago a burly tree-dweller, with a little more imagination than usual, paused in his game-stalking to pick some flowers which, for no reason he could give, reminded him of his woman. With the flowers clutched in his massive paw, he returned to her tree bungalow and handed her the first bouquet.

Ever since then men have been tendering nosegays, timidly or boldly, to some minx. "I bring flowers to a lovelier flower," is what they are trying to say. There's no getting away from it, men always have and always will think of their favorite females in terms of posies.

A nice romantic custom and one that women should foster carefully by trying to be *really* flower-like. You may not look as much like a flower as Loretta Young, with her graceful slenderness and her fragile beauty of face, but you can still be truly flower-like in your immaculate freshness and daintiness. Man's sense of smell isn't as acute as it was when he had to depend on it for his food and safety, but it is still a factor to be reckoned with.

So do try to be as clean as a flower and as fragrant. It's one of the ways we can make men forget that our noses are too long, or our legs too short! And what an easy, pleasant, and inexpensive way-to-charm it is. You loll for a few minutes each day in a warm tub scented with bath oils or bath salts. Or you step out of your shower and rub fragrant cologne over your body. You apply deodorants that are as simple to use as they are sure in effect. You dust silky powder over yourself before donning your nightie to drift off to pleasanter dreams. Just before answering the doorbell that heralds the date of the moment, you spray perfume on the pert bow in your hair. Shopping, you relieve your lagging spirits by applying a bit of perfume from the little flacon in your purse.

And the amazing thing about it is that you don't need a big bank balance to achieve one or several or all of these touchstones to flowerlike daintiness. Nor need you have the highly developed nose and the chemical knowledge of a perfumer in order to choose scents that are truly lovely. It's as easy to pick a floral scent as it is to decide whether you prefer the smell of a rose to that of a cluster of lilacs. When you get into the realm of more complicated bouquet odors, it's just a matter of deciding whether you like a lighter or heavier or spicier fragrance. You should, of course, choose the lighter odors for daytime and outdoor wear, the heavier ones for evening and indoor wear.

Don't expect a drop of perfume to last for days. The very essence of a perfume's charm is that it does *not* last forever. Some scents are longer-lived

ATTENTION, READERS!

Play up to men's noses as well as their eyes, if you want to be really deadly in your effect. Learn to rely on soap and water, colognes, bath powders, perfumes, and deodorants—as well as your lipstick and face powder. If you have any questions on these fragrant charm-aids, send them to Wynne McKay. She'll tell you what to use and how to use it. Address Wynne McKay, Beauty Editor, ROMANTIC MAGAZINE, 1501 Broadway, New York City, and don't neglect to enclose a stamped envelope (3 cents U.S. postage) for her reply.

Mirror

By WYNNE McKAY

Bath salts are dressed up in perfume-laden potted plant costumes for Spring.

than others, but that does not make them the more precious. It used to be that the methods of application were severely limited. A gal asked herself: "Shall I put it behind my ears or on my handkerchief?" But now there are almost as many ways of using perfume as there are perfumes. There are the many ways of utilizing it in connection with the bath—either putting scented preparations in the water or applying them on the body after the bath. There are atomizers for spraying scent on your skin or on your clothes. Or you can perfume bits of cotton and pin them to your undies, spray scent on artificial flowers, and scent your clothes by keeping them surrounded with sachet bags.

Here again, individual taste enters the picture. I am in favor of using good perfume in all possible ways, just seeing to it that the application is never too lavish at any one point. It is this all-over permeating of clothes *and* body with a light, delicate scent that makes the perfume seem a part of you. It is this that makes people conscious of a pleasant fragrance when you hold out your hand, turn your head, walk across the room, go through any of the little day-by-day gestures that can express graciousness and charm in a woman.

THERE are three pieces of news on the perfume front, breaking just at the right time—when Spring is in the air—the season when we all feel an urge to copy [*Please turn to page* 16]

Is this *Your Lucky Day?*

You'll say "YES" when you find your lucky color among my 10 thrilling new face powder shades! See it bring you new radiance—breathe new life into your skin!

Wouldn't you say this was *Your Lucky Day* if you found a way to win extra compliments—extra attention—extra admiration? A way that can bring out the sparkle in your hair—the dancing light in your eyes?

The prize I'm talking about is the one flattering shade of face powder that can create a new "you". . . your one and only "lucky" color. For you know as well as I do that the *wrong* powder color can actually hide your best points instead of bringing them out and giving you a lift.

Perhaps you're saying—"This doesn't concern *me*. My powder color seems all right." But are you sure? Are you certain you have found the face powder color that is *100% right* for you—the one that is so true that it blends into your skin—so natural that it seems as if the color comes from within? The day you find that color will indeed be a lucky day for you. That's why I'm so anxious to have you try all 10 of my face powder colors. Because I am sure that your special color is among them.

My gift to you

I've helped many others, and I'll gladly help you, too. If you'll send me your name and address, I'll mail you all ten of the glorifying new shades of Lady Esther Face Powder *free and postpaid.*

When my gift arrives—try on every shade. Try each one carefully. Then STOP at the one and only color which whispers, "I am yours, see what I do for you. Look how I make your eyes shine. And how dreamy soft and radiant I leave your skin!" See how the color seems so natural, so lifelike, so much a part of you.

Have you a lucky penny?

Here's how a penny postcard will bring you luck. It will bring you FREE and postpaid all ten shades of Lady Esther Face Powder, and a generous tube of Lady Esther Four-Purpose Face Cream. Mail the coupon today.

(You can paste this on a penny postcard) (42)

Lady Esther, 7130 West 65th Street, Chicago, Illinois

I want to find my "lucky" shade of face powder. Please send me your 10 new shades free and postpaid, also a tube of your Four-Purpose Face Cream.

*Name*_____

*Address*_____

*City*_____ *State*_____

(If you live in Canada, write Lady Esther, Toronto, Ont.)

GLORIA STUART

20TH CENTURY-FOX STAR

Featured with Shirley Temple in "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm"

has a

ROYAL

VACUUM CLEANER

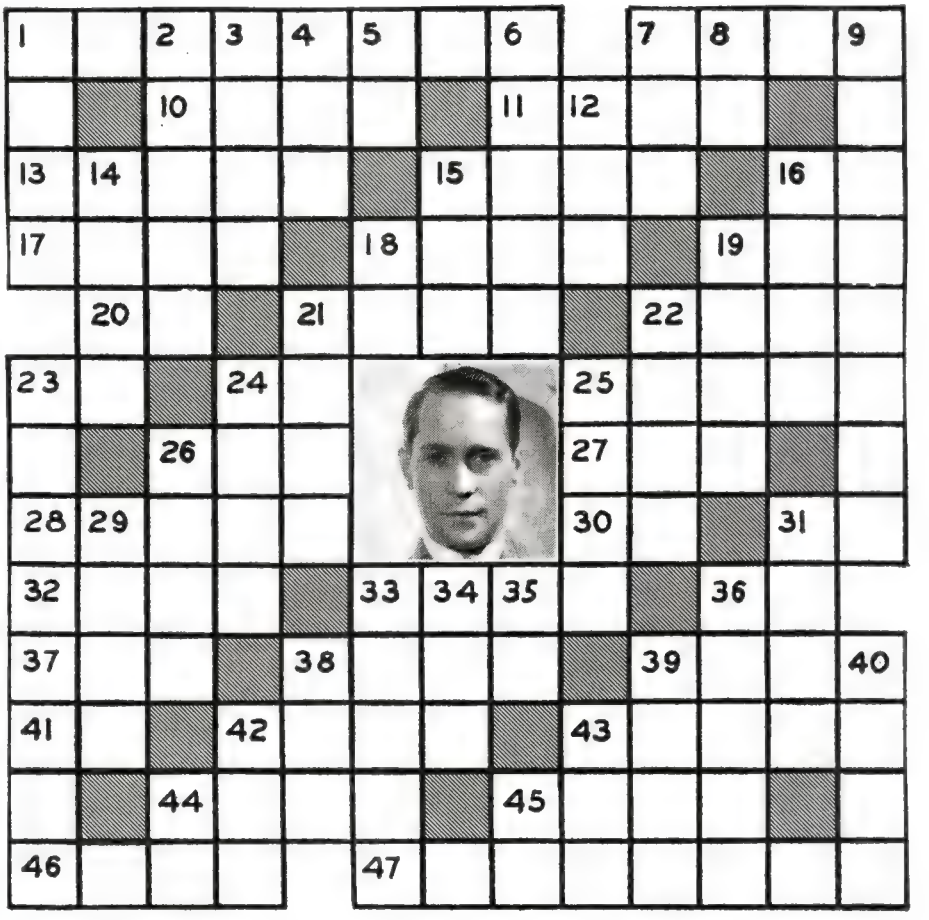
in her Hollywood Home

THE P. A. GEIER CO., CLEVELAND, O.

CONTINENTAL ELECTRIC COMPANY, LTD.

Toronto, Ont., Canada

MOVIE CROSSWORD PUZZLE



For Solution see JUNE ROMANTIC MAGAZINE

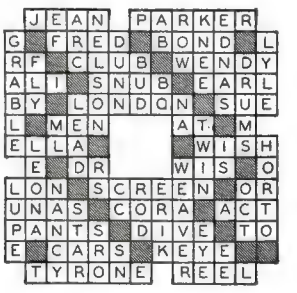
ACROSS

1. & 7. A star of *Man-proof.*
10. Contest such as *Kid Galahad* engaged in.
11. Actresses often change color of this for film roles.
13. First name of male lead in *All-American Sweetheart.*
15. Shirley Temple stars in *Rebecca of Sunnybrook* ———.
16. Marlene's initials.
17. ——— *Confession.*
18. Ship's officer such as Beery in *Slave Ship.*
19. Hairy coat of Krazy Kat.
20. ——— *Happened in Hollywood.*
21. *Mimi* in *Man-proof* (possessive).
22. She sang in *Love on Toast.*
23. Miss Brady's initials.
24. John Barrymore's native state (abbreviated).
25. Descriptive of Stuart Erwin in love scenes.
26. ——— *Man of Brimstone.*
27. ——— *Mile From Heaven.*
28. They help *Bulldog Drummond* solve a crime.
30. Wynne's initials.
31. Article in French film titles.
32. You hear them in musicals.
33. Wife of 1 Across.
36. His last name is Wills.
37. Beverly Ann Welch is one.
38. The girl in *Tarzan's Revenge.*
39. Mr. Kiepura's first name (possessive).
41. Initials of star of *The Sheik Steps Out.*
42. Blonde Viennese singer whose first name is Della.
43. You saw him in *Knight Without Armor.*
44. ——— *Blondes Are Dangerous.*
45. Measure of film (plural).
46. Comedienne with the fluttery hands.
47. Boy actor in *Thoroughbreds Don't Cry.*

DOWN

1. *Think* ——— *Mr. Moto.*
2. *Something To Sing* ———.
3. Lily Pons can sing a high one.
4. What director calls when scene is finished.
5. Initials of Miss Twelvetrees.
6. ——— *My Story.*
7. Jack Holt's son.
8. *Beg, Borrow,* ——— *Steal.*
9. *Paul Morgan* in *Sh' The Octopus.*
12. *Women* ——— *Like That.*
14. Bed sometimes used in nursery scenes.
15. Barbara Stanwyck's ex-husband.
16. He had title role in *The Life of Emile Zola.*
18. Wallace Beery's native state (abbreviated).
19. Movie stars acquire this.
21. What Ben Bernie calls the men in his orchestra.
22. *Tony* in *Merry-Go-Round of 1938.*
23. Where Robinson was imprisoned in *The Last Gangster.*
24. Tuffy's feet.
25. *Ali Baba Goes To* ———.
26. First name of comedian who was *Sugar Boles* in *Love and Hisses.*
29. M-G-M made this animal famous.
31. Miss Basquette's first name.
33. Western star who rides Silver.
34. *In* ——— *Chicago.*
35. Adolphe's initials.
36. Shirley Temple was born in ——— Monica, California.
38. 1 Across was *Jimmy* in *They Gave* ——— *a Gun.*
39. First name of a star of *Wells Fargo.*
40. *A* ——— *Is Born.*
42. Mary ——— Lender was the girl in *County Fair.*
43. Month in which 33 Down was born (abbreviated).
44. Initials of a star of *Love and Hisses.*
45. First National (abbreviated).

Last Month's Solution



Accept No Substitutes! Always Insist on the Advertised Brand!

Sally O'Day's Friendship Club

[*Continued from page 9*]

music and write poetry. I promise to answer all letters, so here's hoping my mail box is filled.

Blue Eyes, Alabama

Come on, cowboys and sailors I AM an eighteen-year-old, blue eyed blonde. I have a special fondness for cowboy songs and for boys who play and sing songs of the golden west. Although I would especially like to hear from cowboys and sailors, I promise long and interesting letters to all boys who answer a lonely girl's plea. Snapshots to everyone who writes, so come on, boys, and write.

Ginger, Minnesota

Can you take a ribbing? CAN you give and take a good ribbing? All those who can, please write to a blue-eyed blonde, who can give and take plenty. I indulge in indoor roller skating, horseback riding and dancing. So if any of you boys and girls with a keen sense of humor are interested, please write.

Rink Brat, Illinois

Another sport lover I AM a light brownette, nineteen years old, and full of pep and fun. I love dancing, tap and ballroom, also swimming and all kinds of sports. I am lonely and would like to hear from boys and girls between the ages of nineteen and twenty-five.

Jean, Michigan

Traveling salesman BEING a salesman covering the eleven western states I have plenty of leisure time on weekends for writing letters, and promise to answer all who write me, and will gladly exchange personal and scenic photos. I am thirty-eight years old, six feet tall. Dancing, hunting, and fishing are my main hobbies.

Jack, Ohio

Aloha from Hawaii I AM a soldier in the United States Army in Hawaii and would like to hear from girls around my own age, which is twenty-one. I am almost six feet tall, have brown hair, not bad to look at, so come and get acquainted with Hawaii. I will exchange pictures and photos with all who write, especially girls from in or around Massachusetts.

Bill, Hawaii

He operates a dude ranch I AM a lonely cowboy, tall, dark, and looking for pen pals. I take care of three hundred head of

[*Please turn to page* 15]

FRESHNESS!

..that's what the world wants in Movie Stars..and Cigarettes

Her Freshness Wins

A favorite of the London stage, Ida Lupino's freshness caught the eye of a Paramount talent scout. She was whisked to Hollywood and stardom in "The Gay Desperado," "Anything Goes," "Artists and Models," "One Rainy Afternoon," "Fight for Your Lady." And the freshness of this young star wins fresh applause!

THE *fear of going stale* keeps half of Hollywood awake nights. For the brightest star becomes a falling star...once freshness fades.

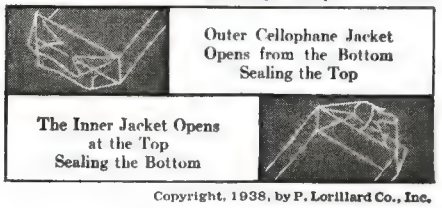
That's equally true of cigarettes. Staleness often makes a "has been" of a cigarette that ought to be in the prime of stardom. Staleness can transform the mildest cigarette into a harsh irritant and rob it of all flavor.

That's why we run no risks with our delightful young star . . . Old Gold. Every pack of Old Golds carries its own freshness right with it . . . *doubly* sealed-in by *2* jackets of stale-proof Cellophane.

At the peak of freshness, wherever and whenever you smoke it, every Old Gold gives a perfect performance in the role of America's most appealing cigarette. The price of one pack admits you to this year's biggest smoking hit . . . "Old Gold Freshies of '38".

TUNE IN on Old Gold's Hollywood Screenscoops, Tues. and Thurs. nights, Columbia Network, Coast-to-Coast

Here's why the O.G. package keeps 'em *fresh*



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LIGHT-PROOF FACE POWDER

The make-up improvement that has proved a sensation

Try Luxor Powder. It's* light-proof. *Your face won't shine. Try it! We will send you a box for a DIME.

● At parties, do you instinctively avoid certain lights that play havoc with your complexion? All that trouble with fickle make-up will be overcome when you finish with powder whose particles do not glisten in every strong light.

Seeing is believing

With light-proof powder, your complexion will not constantly be light-struck. In any light. Day or night. Nor will you have all that worry over *shine.*

We will send you a box of Luxor for ten cents. Or you can buy a large box anywhere without waiting, and have your money back if it doesn't please.

Test it in all lights, under all conditions. See how it improves your appearance. See the lovely softness and absence of shine. See how such powder subdues those high lights of cheekbones and chin, and nose.

A large box of Luxor light-proof powder is 55c at drug and department stores; 10c sizes at the five-and-ten stores . . . Or mail coupon below enclosing a silver dime.

LUXOR, Ltd. FAW. 5-38
Chicago

Send me a trial box of Luxor light-proof powder, postpaid. I enclose 10c (silver dime).

☐ Flesh ☐ Rachel ☐ Rose Rachel
☐ Rachel No. 2 ☐ Brunette

*Name*_____

*St. & No.*_____

*P. O.*_____ *State*_____

(This offer not good in Canada)

Your Magazine

By the Editor

PERHAPS many readers have already made the acquaintance of Dr. Valeria Hopkins Parker, who with this issue becomes problems' adviser for ROMANTIC MAGAZINE. During the last twenty years she has traveled all over the nation in her crusade for health and happiness.

I wish that you might all have the opportunity to talk to her in person. It is a stimulating experience to listen to her account of her work. One feels very humble before this sweet and gracious lady whose consuming interest in life is to make people better adjusted to themselves and each other. The wealth of her experience in dealing with boys and girls, men and women, is amazing. More than one desperate and frightened girl who happened to be among the groups Dr. Parker has addressed, has found her a God-sent confidante and adviser. More than one man or woman who has seen a marriage going on the rocks has profited by her wisdom and experience.

Dr. Parker is not afraid to speak plainly, as you will find on reading her column. Her outlook is modern and practical, but her ideals are those ageless ones which are at the backbone of our society.

On one hand, speaking to parents she says, "Your children will get the idea that you are ashamed to discuss sex and will build up their own knowledge on wrong facts if you do not frankly tell them what they should know."

But she urges that parents should teach their children proper romantic ideals. "Choose wisely, build a home, and raise a family," she says. "That is the Christian ideal of marriage which you should practice and for which your children should be prepared."

Read her column to learn more of her point of view of life. We hope you will find the monthly discussion under "Love and Life" helpful, and do not hesitate to ask her for help on any problem.

NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE

RECENTLY there came to our desk an absorbing story by a girl whose message will surely be helpful to those feeling the teeth of the economic recession. It is a simply-told confession of a young girl whose engagement had lasted too long—because they did not have the money to be married. So desperate was the plight of her sweetheart that he was obliged to apply for relief. How his spirit was broken, and how she tried to help him win back his self-respect, is a part of the story.

We quote one paragraph to show you how she thought things through:

"The lost generation, Bud had said we were, and tonight, with Sye's lips on mine, I'd found the reason why. Lost, because we were willing to accept substitutes! Easy love, for the hard, real love we wanted. Drinks, gaiety, for emotions that tore at us too terribly. Shams, instead of reality. That's why we were lost!"

You'll find this an unforgettable story. Read it under the title "Long Engagement" in the June ROMANTIC MAGAZINE. If you don't agree with the girl who tells the story, write us a letter and we'll see that it reaches her.

Next month's cover will feature a beautiful young air hostess—and inside you'll find a true story describing the romances and lives of the hostesses. We wonder if you'll be as startled as we were at some of the data therein. For instance, on just one airline, six hostesses were wed in a single week, last March.

The article tells you all about how air hostesses are chosen, what kind of men they meet, how some of them have chances in Hollywood. The complete article appears in the June issue.

ONCE again we want to remind our readers that this is *your* magazine and the only way we can give you exactly what you want is to hear from you. Every letter addressed to the editor will get a personal acknowledgment. Of course, we can't acknowledge those that come in signed "anonymous." And, by the way, if you have a criticism, don't be afraid to come out in the open with it. We can take it!

MONEY FOR YOU

Do you know of some instance of great courage, either in your own life or in some one else's life? Perhaps, up to now, it has never been told. If you will write us a letter describing it, and we are able to use that letter in the magazine, we will pay you $5.00. Because some of these instances of courage may be extremely personal, real names will not be used if the letter is published. Address "Courage and Life" Editor, ROMANTIC MAGAZINE, 1501 Broadway, New York, New York. Enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope if you wish your contribution returned in the event we do not find it acceptable.

Accept No Substitutes! Always Insist on the Advertised Brand!

Sally O'Day's Friendship Club

[*Continued from page* 13]

cattle during the winter, and operate my dude ranch during the summer, so you see I have a lot of time to write letters in the long winter evenings. My favorite hobbies are motorcycling and fishing. Will exchange photos with all who write to this twenty-six-year-old cowboy.

J. H., Montana

Doesn't care to hear from the fair sex

I AM a tall young man of twenty in search of some real male pals, as the fairer sex doesn't interest me. The theatre and dancing are my dish, so please write to this lonely Canadian boy. I promise very interesting letters, and will exchange snaps with all who write.

Lorne, Ontario

S. O.S. from the desert

AT PRESENT I am living on the desert where there's not much young company, so I would like to have a lot of correspondents. I'm tall, blond, and twenty-six, so let's hear from all "youse guys and gals." I am interested in art, dancing, and many other indoor and outdoor sports. I'll gladly exchange photos, and I can tell you lots about Hollywood and California, being a native son. So, California and all, let's have your letters and photos. Don't keep me waiting, please.

Charles, California

An English soldier in Palestine

I AM a young Englishman in the Medical Service of the British Army in Palestine. I am twenty-five years of age and would like to correspond with young girls all over the world. I am well educated and have traveled quite a bit, so promise to make my letters interesting. All letters will be answered promptly, and I'll be glad to exchange photos.

Art, Palestine

He's sung his way over the world

I AM a young man of twenty-four, blond. My design for living is travel, travel of the lengthy variety. I've sung my way to the principal countries of continental Europe, together with visits to Australia, Alaska, Hawaii, New Zealand. I have a craving for seeing strange places and making new friends, so you have my promise, and it's in writing, to lend an ear to correspondence from any port of call pertaining to law, political economy, dancing, voice, etc. A wanderer seeks "The Pearl of Great Price" in your friendship. Will you steady his course?

Don, California

PRINCIPAL GREYHOUND INFORMATION OFFICES

Cleveland, O. . . . . E. 9th & Superior
Philadelphia, Pa. . . Broad Street Station
New York City . . . . 245 W. 50th Street
Chicago, Ill. . . . . 12th & Wabash
Boston, Mass. . . . . 60 Park Square
Washington, D. C. . . . . 1403 New York Avenue, N. W.
Detroit, Michigan . . . . . Washington Blvd. at Grand River
St. Louis, Mo. . Broadway & Delmar Blvd.
Charleston, W. Va. . 155 Summers Street

The GREYHOUND LINES

San Francisco, Cal. . . Pine & Battery Sts.
Ft. Worth, Tex. . . 905 Commerce Street
Minneapolis, Minn. . . 509 Sixth Ave., N.
Lexington, Ky. . . . . 801 N. Limestone
Memphis, Tenn. . . . 527 N. Main Street
New Orleans, La. . . 400 N. Rampart St.
Cincinnati, O. . . . . 630 Walnut Street
Richmond, Va. . . . . 412 E. Broad Street
Toronto, Ont. . . . 1501 Royal Bank Bldg.
London, England . . . . . A. B. Reynoldson, 49 Leadenhall St.

—*And Most in Information!* Just write on the line below the place or places you're planning to visit. Then mail this coupon to the nearest Greyhound information office listed above for descriptive, pictorial travel booklets, also low rates and suggested routes.

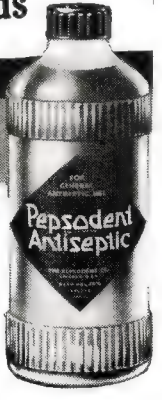
Information on trip to _____

Name _____

Address _____ FW-5

To help Prevent
COLDS
and Bad Breath..

Use
PEPSODENT
ANTISEPTIC
...the 10-Second Germ-Killer!
In Germ-Killing Power . . . One bottle Pepsodent Antiseptic *equals* three bottles of ordinary kinds



Even when diluted with 2 parts water, still kills germs in seconds...Lasts 3 times as long!

MAKES YOUR MONEY GO 3 TIMES AS FAR!

BEFORE THE MIRROR

[*Continued from page* 11]

the freshness and fragrance that spells Spring, no matter whether it occurs in April or October. The first news concerns a flower pot of bath salts, sketched nearby. If you like to decorate your bathroom at the same time that you cater to the Cleopatra in you, this is your dish. There's a geranium "plant" containing pink, geranium-scented bath salts, a hyacinth plant with blue lilac, scented bath salts, and an array of field flowers a-bloom over yellow bath salts with a bouquet odor. If these varieties don't please you, my proud beauty, then perhaps you'd prefer a pot of pink and blue crocuses with green, cologne-scented salts, or one with lavender and white crocuses embedded in lavender-tinted salts, also cologne scented. A really colorful bathroom shelf would have two or three "plants" ranged in a row. One would make a grand Easter or May Day gift for an invalid, don't you agree? Each one costs $1.95.

Purse flacon of perfume comes with a harmonizing cologne.

Our artist also sketched another headline in the news line-up—a combination offer of a popular perfume in purse flacon and a bottle of cologne in the same lovely scent. The smartness of these midnight blue and silver containers is only a hint of the quality of the perfume and cologne inside. It has weathered the constantly shifting winds of women's perfume fancies—for, lo, these many years. This combination offer costs only ninety-five cents. A $1.00 size bottle of the perfume also comes in an attractive blue plastic basket all beribboned for Easter giving. I'll be glad to send you the trade name if you like.

This shower bath brush makes for stimulating, enjoyable showers.

Four flower-fragrant talcs, the third of the news flashes, though news to me, can't really be called news for they've been on the market for thirty years. The texture of these powders is light as air and their quality, though they cost only ten cents a can, is irreproachable. Each one comes in a simple, smart looking tin with flower design and a workable shaker top. The flower scent of each of the talcums is remarkably true, you'll find if you have a nose for posies. You have your choice of sweet pea, gardenia, rose, and orchid. Personally, I love them all. Want to try them?

Because scented toiletries will avail you nothing unless you apply them on an immaculately clean body, I'm going to tell you now about two accessories to cleanliness. One is a luscious pink all over body lotion, creamy and hauntingly perfumed. It's made especially for those who find that their skins feel dry and irritated after bath or shower when the natural lubricating oils have been removed. But it will be appreciated by *anyone*, for it leaves the body so soft and velvety-smooth, so delicately perfumed. Not the faintest trace of stickiness remains to hinder you as you don your girdle. Another thing this all-over body lotion does is to banish that ugly, dry shine on your legs that shows through sheer hose. It comes in a tall clear bottle through which the shell-pink lotion shows, contrasting with the gold label. Costs $1.10, and lasts a long time because it spreads so far. Want the name?

The other item that makes your daily all-over cleansing easier and more fun is a shower bath brush. You've no idea how much more stimulating and cleansing a shower or bath is when you give yourself a good scrubbing with a firm-bristled brush. Makes you all pink and glowing, and cleaner than clean. If you're a shower addict, though, you've probably already discovered how impossible it is to manipulate a long-handled bath brush without making painful dents in the wall or yourself. This new shower bath brush settles the matter, for it has a short but adequate handle, permitting you to get a good firm hold and allowing you to reach even the middle of your back without undue contortions. You can get a pretty clear idea of its shape by the accompanying sketch, which shows it neatly hanging on the shower faucet, where it can dry quickly. The bristles are firm, white, and resilient, set in aluminum facing to hasten drying. You can buy the brush in natural maple for $1.50 at most department stores.

And you can bet these charm-aids to beauty will lure the most unsuspecting male to thoughts of hearts and flowers.

Good Manners

Counter–Wise

They can make or break the reputation of a shopping center—those thousands of behind-the-counter-girls who are bound by and to the successful business man's creed that "the customer is always right." And though harassed Spring shoppers may forget their counter manners, it is the wise sales girl who sticks to the code of the COUNTER-WISE.

1. Give undivided attention to one customer at a time.

2. Recognize a waiting shopper with an "I'll-be-with-you-in-just-a-minute" smile.

3. Develop confidence in shoppers by giving an *honest* and interested opinion.

4. If a shopper becomes a steady customer, learn her name, and ask about her cute little daughter.

5. A "May-I-help-you?" attitude is the right attitude.

6. Don't visit with other sales clerks when shoppers are waiting.

7. Don't talk a shopper into a sale she doesn't really want.

8. Don't make remarks about other shoppers or other sales clerks.

9. Don't call a shopper "Honey" or "Dearie."

10. Don't "freeze up" if a shopper decides not to buy.

UNLUCKY IN LOVE ...until she learned how to correct that Misfit-Makeup look

"I'm so lonely—and not a date in weeks."

"Men don't like conspicuous misfit makeup."

She took the hint. And now—"Let's step out a lot!"

To end Misfit Makeup...

"CHOOSE YOUR MAKEUP BY THE COLOR OF YOUR EYES"

ADVISES *Glenda Farrell* ☆ *Featured in "Stolen Heaven" a Paramount Picture*

TO BE LUCKY IN LOVE, say Hollywood stars, you can't risk misfit makeup...unrelated cosmetics that can't possibly look well together—or on you!

ARE YOU SURE *your* makeup *matches*... and matches *you?* You are, when you wear Marvelous, the new Matched Makeup. For the face powder, rouge, and lipstick—the eye makeup, too—are in color harmonized sets. And Marvelous Makeup is right for you because it's keyed to your personality color, the color that never changes, *the color of your eyes!*

ARTISTS, movie stars, beauty editors—and thousands of girls who wear it—agree this eye-matched makeup flatters *all* your features—your skin, your hair, your type!

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Love and Life

By VALERIA HOPKINS PARKER, M. D.

PROBLEMS ADVISER

WE ARE justifiably proud to introduce to our readers a woman who has a nation-wide reputation for wisdom, kindness, and understanding in problems of romance, sex, and social hygiene. Dr. Valeria Hopkins Parker was in 1936 chosen as one of twenty-four "Women of Achievement" and it is obvious why the New York League of Business and Professional Women honored her in this fashion. Dr. Parker deserves a great deal of the credit for the modern frank and courageous attitude toward problems that were unmentionable when first she started her work over twenty years ago.

As director of the Bureau of Marriage Counsel in New York City, she deals with many marital problems. But this is not her only forte—she has had wide experience with young people in the field of sex education. Family relations, venereal disease control, and allied subjects are all in her province. She's up-to-the-minute, too, for at present she is chairman of the Committee on Protective Care of the New York World's Fair.

The fact that Dr. Parker is a mother and a grandmother is one of her most important qualifications. You will find her a sympathetic listener, no matter what your problem.—The Editor.

THESE columns are to be devoted to those young men and women who are facing problems in the field of sex and social relationships, as well as love and marriage. Effort will also be made to assist parents in understanding the needs of youth.

Many young people about to marry wish advice which may be helpful in making the partnership a success. During the past twenty years I have been privileged in making contact with thousands of young women eager to know and understand about love and life. Some of these had already made unfortunate choices through their failure to understand the values involved.

June is the month of brides. Of course, each bride and groom will hope to make marriage a success, yet some will meet with failure because they have not understood, beforehand, the delicate adjustments necessary if true harmony is to be attained. In every home, the happiness of husband and wife will be disturbed, at times, by disappointment, anxiety, sickness, sorrow. All of these can be met with courage if initial confidence and personal adjustment find husband and wife together in meeting their common experiences.

Too often, those who marry look for continuous thrills and demonstrations of affection, failing utterly to understand what romance is. Frequently this is the fault of early education; sometimes the influence of false ideals presented by books, or movies, or imagination.

No romance can compare with that of a man and woman who choose one another from all others; decide to build a home together; are able to face difficulties as well as happiness together through a long period of years, and who find themselves together toward the end of life with children grown, grandchildren coming; perfect confidence in one another having been gained by success in sharing the experiences of life. The final anxiety is as to which shall be taken first, the other left a little longer! To those of religious faith, even death cannot bring permanent separation.

Because of bent bodies, hair whitened with age, faces lined by wife's experiences, such married romance is not always recognized by those who are young. Yet these romances are numerous and are to be found in every community.

All the world loves a lover! Those who are, this June, to start upon the new partnership of marriage have my earnest wishes for success in the adventure. For them I publish a letter I recently received from a bride-to-be.

Dear Dr. Parker:

I expect to be married in June to a man a little older than I. We have known each other for six years and have been engaged for three so we both feel that we are each sure of the other's love. Also our parents feel happy about our approaching marriage and would have been willing for us to marry two years ago, but we were not able to feel safe, financially, until we had both saved something for the future.

As the time for our wedding draws near, we realize more than ever how many marriages fail. We both feel the need of advice about things that might help us to be sure of making our marriage a success. None of our parents finds it easy to talk to us about this. They seem to feel that if people are divorced it is their own fault, yet I have known some fine people whose marriages were unhappy.

Could you help us, or is it best for us to work things out for ourselves, knowing that we do truly love one another?

A JUNE BRIDE.

Dear June Bride:

Your letter shows that you and your fiance have many elements in your love which should be of help in making your marriage successful. You have known each other for some time; you have had opportunity to develop many tastes in common; to know one another's families and to secure their approval of [*Please turn to page* 75]

If you want to consult with Dr. Parker on a problem involving romance, marriage, family relationship or social hygiene, you may write her in care of this magazine. She will give a personal reply and treat each letter confidentially. Some of the letters, with answers, and without signatures, will be included in this department, if Dr. Parker believes the subject discussed might be helpful to others. She will not make medical diagnoses or prescriptions, and if these are required, can only refer you to local agencies or your own doctor.

Each letter must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addresed envelope. Address your letters to Valeria Hopkins Parker, M.D., care of ROMANTIC MAGAZINE, 1501 Broadway, New York, New York. You will find her a helpful and sympathetic listener.

PORTRAIT OF THE MONTH

When Fernand Gravet, a perfect stranger, kisses Carole Lombard, another perfect stranger, in Paris, an old Parisian custom is revived. They co-star in Warner's new picture *Fools For Scandal*.

Kisses for

JOEY'S shocking news in cable and letter, delayed by rains and broken wires, found me two thousand miles up the Amazon. I was visiting a friend whose husband was a doctor on a rubber plantation. It took me three weeks to reach the coast, and it was two more before my boat docked in New York.

I took the first plane out to Chicago, and a train from there to Betty Lambert's at Graywood. Betty was home all alone, except for the servants. Her mother had died years ago and her father was in England on a business trip.

The Lamberts had a big, gloomy house, with an iron fence around it, and iron dogs guarding the old-fashioned lawn. Betty met me at the door, and took me straight to her room. But we were hardly inside, with the door closed behind us, before she was in my arms clinging to me, crying, her brown head against my shoulder.

I tried to shut my eyes to John's haggard face. Shut my heart to this man who had condemned my brother. The words came trembling from my lips. "I'll be there," I said. They played bridge that night without me.

Betty and I had gone to the same eastern finishing school together. It was through me she had met Joey and they had fallen in love with each other. She had always been such a tiny thing, so bright and gay and sweet. Now the change in her stunned me. The sweetness had gone, the youth. There was a hardness about her, a brittleness like thin-blown glass. And I could feel her shoulder blades, almost fleshless beneath my hands.

"It's my fault, Mimi," she sobbed, "the whole terrible mess! If I hadn't fought with Joey that night at the club. If I hadn't given him back his ring and gone home, like a baby with the sulks, he wouldn't have gotten drunk, John Fletcher wouldn't have found Joey with his wife, and Joey wouldn't have taken his car and gone off, the way he did, and run over that poor tramp and killed him.

"It's Midge Fletcher I should have scrapped with! I should have clawed her eyes out—the sneaking, yellow-haired cat! Hanging round Joey, never letting him alone.

"She's tired of John, tired of Graywood. Joey's rich and she wanted him and didn't care how she got him. I hate her! Hate her! Hate her!"

Betty was almost beside herself, shaking, her teeth chattering. I felt pretty bad myself, but I didn't dare let her see it.

"Your hating her isn't getting us anywhere." I made my voice quiet, hard as nails. Nor your blaming yourself. Heaven knows, I don't blame you for being sore at Joey, nor does he. His letter told me he'd played the fool, that he'd made love to Midge Fletcher and her husband had caught them. That it was his car that hit the man and killed him, and that he had gone nearly seven miles before he stopped to turn back.

"Heaven knows that all his life he'll suffer for that, remembering. And he should. But I've come here to find out something, Betty. He said in his letter that because

Revenge

Complete Short Novel Paced in the Modern Manner

John Fletcher was the prosecutor here, he railroaded him into prison, to get even about—his wife. That he asked for twenty years, and it was only luck, and Jess Wagner's defense that got him five. He said that if anyone else had been prosecuting he'd have got off with a fine and a short term—that the fact he had turned around to go back, would have won him that.

"Is that true, Betty? That's what I want to know. Tell me."

"Oh, it's true, all right," Betty said miserably. Jess Wagner is a good lawyer—one of the best in the state. He did everything he could do, but—it didn't amount to much—against John. He hated Joey, all right. He sent him down."

"What sort of a man is this John Fletcher?" I said slowly. "Tell me, Betty. I'd like to hear."

BETTY caught the anger that hardened my voice, saw the hate, that nursed through those long weeks of weary travel, burned high and hot behind my eyes, and her own widened, in a quick, bitter flame of understanding.

"He's about thirty," she said softly, and I could see she was weighing each word, trying to get the right one. "He's—big. He has red hair and a square jaw, and he's self-made, if that tells you anything. He's ambitious, too. Running for congress on the Independent ticket against the state machine and Jess Wagner, who defended Joey. They'd give their eye teeth to dig up something against him, but they can't. And he isn't a woman's man, Mimi, if that's what you're thinking—and I guess it is. I doubt if he's ever looked at a woman but his wife, and not much at her in these last few years. She hasn't given him a chance. Joey isn't the first man she's tried to make, and John knows it. He's off women. If you have any idea of getting even with him, that way, I don't think it would work, Mimi. He'd be on his guard against you from the start, knowing you were Joey's sister."

"Does he have to know, Betty?" I asked. "Listen. No one knows

me here in Graywood, not even your father. Joey and I don't look alike. He's fair, I'm dark. My mother's name was Leason, and mine's really Muriel—you know that. Why couldn't I be Muriel Leason, a *friend* of yours, here visiting you? Why couldn't I meet John Fletcher that way?

"You hate Midge, Betty, and I don't blame you. But John Fletcher is the one I hate. I want to get even with him. I want to pay him for what he did to Joey. Understand, I'm not saying that Joey's running over that man wasn't an awful thing. He should have been punished—but I can't forgive John Fletcher for making it a cruel and unreasonable punishment, when it was his own wife who was leading Joey on. It's all I've been able to think of for weeks—ever since Joey's awful letter came. I want to hurt Fletcher as he's hurt Joey."

"There aren't many men you couldn't hurt if you tried to," Betty said, her eyes sweeping me, "but—John—I don't know, Mimi."

Then, wearily. "All right, if you're game, I am. There's a dinner dance tonight at the club. If you hurry, we can make it. It's the best way to meet him I can think of, and the quickest.

"Oh," at my quick-thrown question, "he'll be there all right. Midge will see to that. Dinner dances at the club are Graywood's 'society,' you know. Midge never misses one. And John's in town. I saw him on the street today. I'll see you meet them both. There's no open feud between us. Just one of those sweet under-cover ones, that everyone knows about but doesn't recognize."

I dressed for that dinner like a "warrior going into battle" I told myself, and laughed. And the bitterness of that laughter was still on my crimson, twisted lips, when I met John Fletcher.

There are things that happen in people's lives they never forget. Joey behind prison bars is one of them for me. The other—my first sight of John Fletcher.

My mother had been a tall woman. I was even taller than she, with her creamy skin and shining coal-black hair. And my lips were a red challenge against the oval pallor of my face, as, answering the warning of Betty's hand, and the guidance of her quick-flashed glance, I swung to meet him.

We were standing, Betty and I, the center of a gay, laughing group, and it was over their heads that our eyes met, and for a strange, startled second, held.

A huge man, towering head and shoulders above the crowded room, dwarfing it, dominating it. A man with a strong, rough-hewn face, topped by thick, unruly hair. Not red, as Betty had said, but a deep, coppery brown, burning red where the light touched it.

As a child I had seen a picture in some half-forgotten book, of a man with flaming hair, standing on a pyre of flames. It had fascinated me, and I had worn the page thin with constant thumbing. I had built about it an ideal that had turned me away from more than one love affair—that had kept me, at twenty-three, still unsatisfied, still vaguely searching. But all at once, in some crazy way, I was seeing that picture again, and thinking, with that old half-frightened awe: "It's my book man! He's come to life! He's walking out of the pages and coming toward me!" Then John Fletcher was beside me, with a small, golden-haired woman hanging on his arm; and I was back on earth once more, a dead, cold body, with a cold, white face, listening to Betty's barbed and bitter introducing.

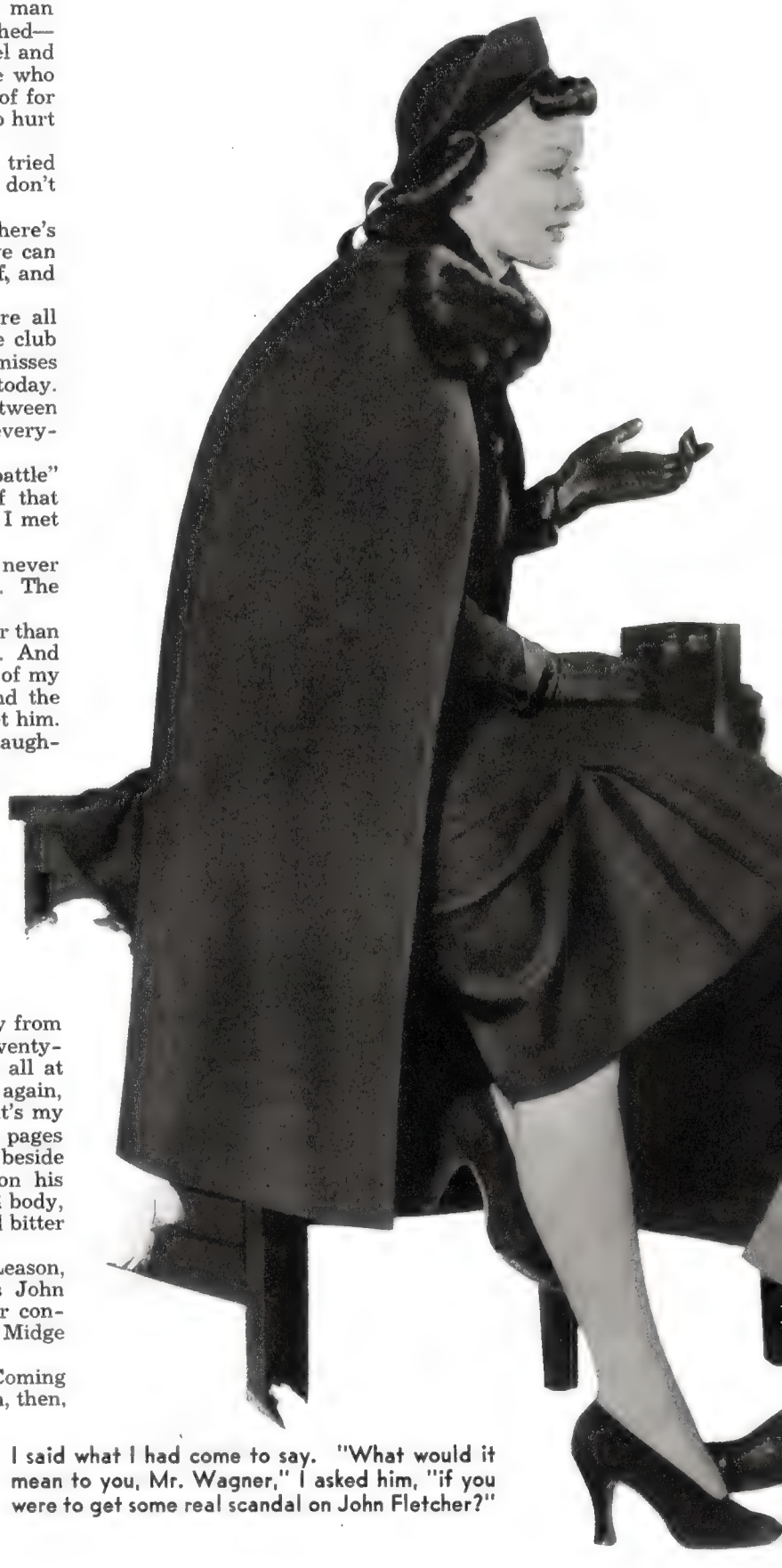
"Oh, John and Midge—I want you to meet Muriel Leason, a friend of mine from the East. Darling, this is John Fletcher, Gaywood's prosecutor, and a candidate for congress. Aren't you thrilled? And his wife—Midge. Midge is so good about showing my friends around.

"Muriel's awfully brave, folks, don't you think? Coming to see *me*, now?" Betty was speaking to both of them, then, but her eyes had shifted to Midge's and her lips were drawing thinly against the hate she was making so little effort to conceal. "And I want her to have a nice time, but—not too nice a time. After all, she didn't come prepared for a five-year stay."

FOR a stiff, shocked second, stillness held the circle around us. Through it, I saw Midge Fletcher, her pretty bisque-doll face flushed, but her secretive, mocking eyes, and her red mouth smiling their answer to Betty's challenge.

Then John was saying, very quietly, "Is there a chance for a dance, Miss Leason?"

We were on the floor, dancing together, while conscious-



I said what I had come to say. "What would it mean to you, Mr. Wagner," I asked him, "if you were to get some real scandal on John Fletcher?"

ness of him, of his nearness, of the warm vital touch of his hands, was drowning for a wild, short instant, all thought in me, of time or place or thing.

It does strange things to one, having an ideal—a dream—come to life, having it take blood and flesh and form.

I knew he was speaking, but his words came thinly at first, just part of that vague, soft mist that held me.

"You are so tall. I've never seen a women so tall and so very beautiful. I'm reminded of that sentimental simile—a white birch swaying in the wind. Did you ever see the birches, Miss Leason, with the moon behind them, and the night wind blowing through their leaves?"

I had needed that to break the spell that held me. Joey loved trees and the wind blowing through them. We had spent more than one summer together in the north woods, Joey and I. Shame that I could have forgotten, even for so short a time, my hate and the purpose that had brought me here tonight, rose in my voice, coloring it, deepening it.

"You must get a great deal of pleasure thinking of things like that, Mr. Prosecutor," I said softly. "You, who have sent so many men where they'll never see the night wind blowing through the birches again!"

I could feel the sudden stiffening of his body, but he didn't answer. We finished the dance in silence, his breath on my cheek, the quickened pounding of his heart answering the quickened pounding of mine. While the music wailed and sobbed its mad rhythm about us.

It wasn't until he had swung me through an open door and out onto a broad wide-circling balcony that he spoke at last.

It was a moonless night, clouds scudding white against the dark velvet of a star-splattered sky, and the smell of autumn fires thick on the air. His voice was as heavy as the night itself, and his words as tired as the down-dropping leaves.

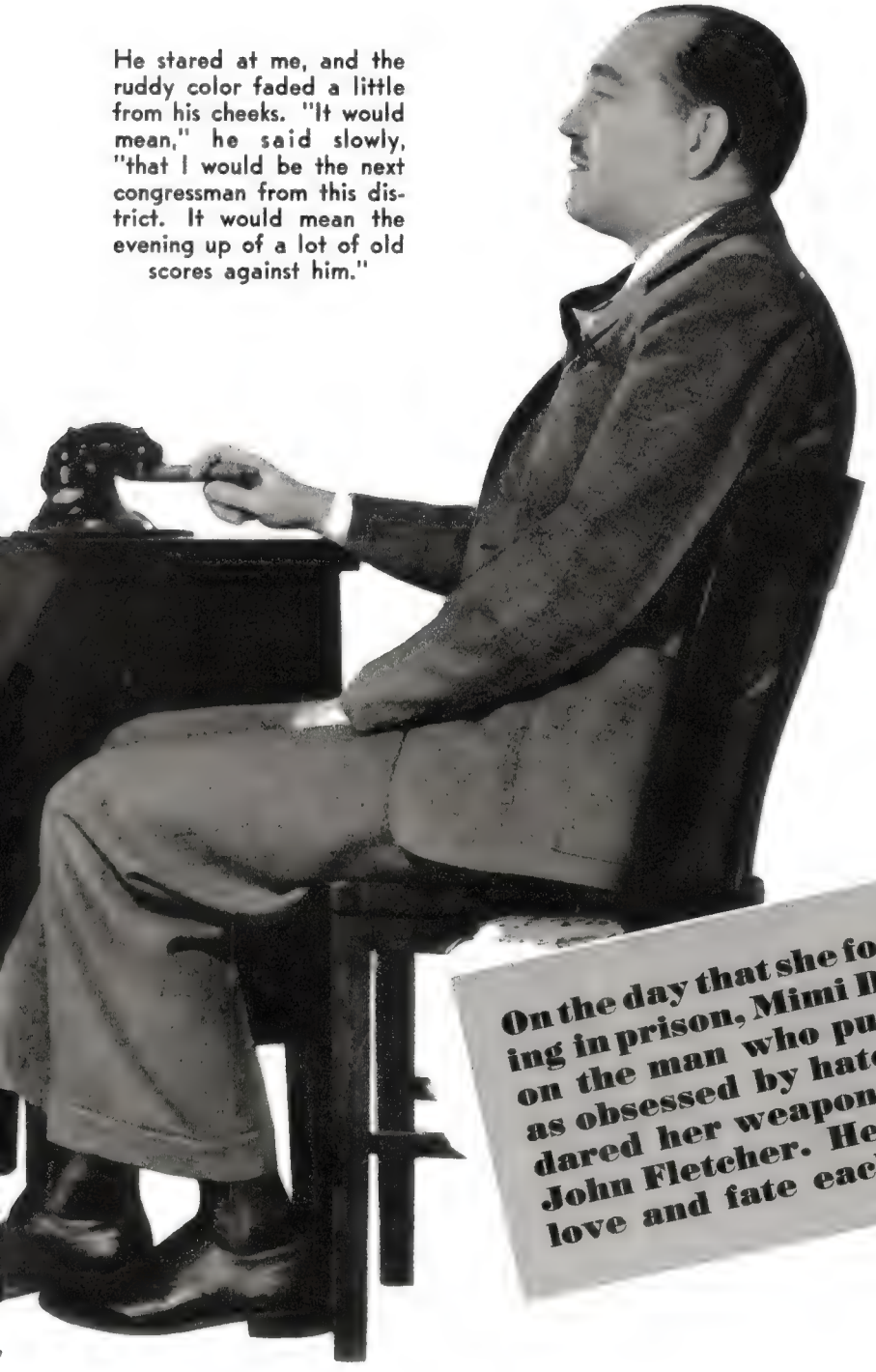
"You said something back there on the dance floor that—cut. You said it because you are Betty Lambert's friend, and you wanted to hurt me. My experience with women," his lips twisted, "has left me rather thick-skinned. I thought I never could be hurt by a woman again. I was mistaken. You see—I've never met a woman like you—before. I wish I hadn't now.

"I'm not trying to pretend I don't know what you're thinking. I do. You're thinking what Betty thinks—what Jess Wagner thinks—what half this town thinks, and don't dare say. That I sent Joey Deming to the penitentiary because I'd caught him making love to my wife. That isn't true. It isn't, do you hear? It isn't—!"

He caught my hands and held them, pulled me close until his face was almost against mine, and held me there. I don't know what I expected—most anything might have come from those contorted, twisting lips, but I certainly didn't expect the stark, bleak misery of that furious, hoarse repeating.

"Do you suppose—" he threw his words down against my ears, "that I haven't asked myself that? Do you suppose, through these nights and days, I haven't been asking myself over and over again? Do you suppose that I don't know the woman who has been my wife for six years? That I don't know what she can do to men—boys—?

"There have been affairs before. That had nothing to do with the sentence. I swear it didn't! A hit and run driver—a drunken driver who could kill a man and run away! I asked for twenty years. He should have had it. If I have anything to do with it, he'll serve out the five the judge gave him. But not because of what he did—to me. [*Please turn to page* 44]



He stared at me, and the ruddy color faded a little from his cheeks. "It would mean," he said slowly, "that I would be the next congressman from this district. It would mean the evening up of a lot of old scores against him."

On the day that she found her twin brother dying in prison, Mimi Deming swore vengeance on the man who put him there. Only a girl as obsessed by hate as was she would have dared her weapons to ruin the indomitable John Fletcher. Her confession tells you how love and fate each took a part in her plan.

We stood there, helpless atoms in a world being destroyed. Dear heaven, did we have one chance of coming through alive?

MARK'S taxi churned up the hill and came to a slithering stop in front of the old Opera House. He slid from the front seat to open the door, and as I got out, tried to protect me from the driving deluge. The flood had risen to the hub cap now, and below us Main Street stretched ahead like an oily black river. The only lights came from crazily careening cars which hung low against the surface of the steadily rising water. The Opera House was built on a hill. It towered now as the safest spot in town. The electric current had been cut off, but Deke Ludlow had put flares in front of the building, a grotesquely valiant signal that the show must still go on.

"They wouldn't be crazy enough to put on that show tonight," Mark declared.

"They wouldn't be crazy enough not to," I tossed back. "It will give us the first chance to hang out the S. R. O. sign—*Swimming Room Only.* Deke has broadcast that the theatre boxes and galleries can be used as a refuge, with fire escapes leading to the roof. It's the highest spot in town. With all the hotels and hospitals crowded, can't you see what a break that gives the show? For the first time this season we'll be playing to a crowded house."

"If that doesn't beat the devil!" He grinned. "I believe you really mean it."

"Sure I mean it. Come in and see. The whole cast is on their toes."

Inside the theatre the ushers were propelling rafts and flat bot-

The Peril We Shared

tom boats from the lobby to the balcony stairs. The stage was still several feet above the water and was lighted by a row of red kerosene lanterns. The orchestra had been forced up from the pit and sat huddled in a little group outside the wings.

"Let's beat it, Leta, while we still can," Mark pleaded. "The citizens have been warned to evacuate. If we go right now we can drive across the Main Street bridge; but if this rain keeps on, the dam will give way and then heaven help us."

"The trouble with you, Mark—" I tried to grin even while my teeth were chattering—"is that you haven't any vision. Do you suppose this town will ever forget the girl who sang and danced for them on the worst night of the flood? And when it's all over she'll be fixed for life."

"You're getting yourself mixed up with Nero and his fiddle," he growled. "And what makes you so sure it ever will be all over? Just take a look at that river out there, with houses and bridges floating around like straws, and high tension wires tangled up in the wreckage. There's only one wing of the dam still holding, and when that goes this town won't know what struck it."

But even as Mark tried to describe it, the full horror of the flood wasn't quite real to me. It was still something you read about in the papers, something you saw pictures of in the movies. Sure, the water was swirling in the streets, the inside of the theatre was a churning mad house, but even yet—it didn't seem real.

The rain would stop, I told myself; rain always did, if you gave it time. The water would disappear after a while as it always had in our cellar back home. No lives had been lost. This was the same dull, little city that only a few days ago had been so placidly sane and so coolly indifferent to all my efforts to amuse it.

Our show, so far, had been a dismal flop. Deke Ludlow had put his last cent into it, and we'd staked everything on putting it over. If it folded, we might as well kiss the show business good-by. Everyone had warned Deke that he was a fool to stick to the theatre, anyhow, and so far as we could make out, he was about the only showman who had. He still believed we'd be able to buck the movies if we stuck it out long enough; and he was trying desperately to pull us through the season.

"I've just got a great idea, Leta," Deke shouted to me now from the wings. "We're going to give a benefit performance for the flood victims, right here in the old Opera House tonight. That'll drag 'em in. Get a megaphone, Mark, and help us shout it—literally right from the housetops. Listen to this," and he lifted a loud speaker:

"Right this way folks—a dollar for the destitute. H e l p your neighbor while you keep yourself dry. This way, ladies and gentlemen, a dollar a seat for the refugees, in the safest spot in town."

Mark started to pick up the megaphone, but I took it from his hand. "Go on out and build up your own racket," I told him, "and I'll do the shouting around here. Where's your imagination? Tie a boat and a couple of oars to your bumper and start some rescue stunts. Do you suppose this town would ever forget the handsome taxi driver who saved their wives and children? Go on, get busy, and build up your future."

Still grumbling, he went back to his cab while I dashed up to the roof with a megaphone. What a swell bit of publicity this was going to be for the Deke Ludlow Road Show! As yet, it didn't seem so serious to me. Later I wondered how I could have been so flippant.

From the roof I looked down at a world gone mad. The streets, viewed like that from above, seemed like black, c r a w l i n g snakes, writhing in and out through a huddle of crouching shapes. Flares from the airport flung faint, far-off fingers through the steady downpour of rain. Headl i g h t s from crawling cars gleamed like the eyes of p r o w l i n g dragons t h r o u g h the night. Above, the sky was a huge, [*Please t u r n t o p a g e* 57]

To My Everlasting Sorrow... I

"WELL, all I can say is that Mr. Ziegfeld is picking them younger and prettier," the stranger said, after my girl friend introduced us. This pleasant bit of flattery set my cheeks afire.

It was the year 1929. We were having dinner at a famous seafood restaurant in the theatrical district of New York City. It is still a popular rendezvous for Hollywood stars when they are East.

My friend Jewel and I were dancing in the chorus of Flo Ziegfeld's famous Follies. Jewel introduced this stranger as Jack Reed, a big real estate promoter.

That night I did not know that this charming man opposite me was Jack Diamond, the gangster!

Yet his appeal from the first was magnetic. I was but eighteen years of age and was frightfully innocent and unsophisticated. This was my first date in New York. It was not exactly a date tonight, for I was the spare luggage. Yet throughout the dinner I was in a state of ecstatic confusion. And all because of this slim, dark, well-mannered and smooth-talking male sitting across from me. My confusion was heightened by the fact that he was devoting all his attention to me. He stared constantly, drinking in every move, his eyes registering approval.

Thus in March, 1929, naive little Marion Strasmick of Allston, Massachusetts, met Jack "Legs" Diamond, the gangster. I remember no more of the conversation that night. I recall it only as the night when life began for me.

It was a new experience to be monopolizing the attention of a male. Everyone else in the restaurant seemed to be lionizing him. All the waiters bowed to him. Before he entered the dining room, in the adjacent bar, we could hear the warm greetings that signaled his arrival.

"Hi, Jack! Back in town, Jack! Hi ya, pal!" the bartenders and guests showered after him as he approached.

They swarmed to greet him. Everyone seemed to want to be his friend. I could see that he was a big-shot of some kind. But I did not realize that he was a gangster. I remember I was wearing a light gray ensemble that night. Well I knew how this set off my titian hair. I must have been passable, for I had met the test of the country's first judge of beauty, Mr. Flo Ziegfeld. My face and nimble toes had placed me in the Follies along with Ruth Etting, Bing Crosby, Eddie Cantor, Ethel Shutta and George Olsen as well as other important people in the entertainment world.

Mr. Ziegfeld saw me dance once, changed my name to Roberts and put me in the lead spot in his chorus.

This night I was in the lead spot with "Mr. Reed." It was a new role for me. Before, back in Allston, I had often had dates with the awkward, blundering town boys. But this was so different. Jack was smooth, he was attentive. His conversation was exciting. He was acquainted with so many important people that I knew through the newspapers only. He was continuously wise-cracking. His quips kept Jewel and me in hysterics from the beginning to the end of the dinner.

Here apparently was the real man of my dreams. This night I had stepped into a magic, tinseled world. Jack was light-hearted and gay, moved by a buoyant, fun-seeking spirit. The long shadow of trouble, with police ever spying on him and rival gangsters constantly waiting in ambush, later quenched that spirit.

I REMEMBER how thrilled I was when his hands touched mine as, at the end of the evening, he helped me into my wrap. He called a cab to take us home. He gave the driver Jewel's address first.

Jewel left us at her apartment and then Jack and I were alone. I lived but a few blocks farther, yet I was thrilled to be riding alone in a taxi with a real playboy. A genuine New York smoothee.

The thought excited me, kept my heart pounding. Then I received the surprise of my young life. I had expected that Mr. Reed, the big real estate man, would kiss me. Frantically I thought what I should do when he did. But he never tried. I forget whether I was relieved, or disappointed. But I'm sure it must have been the latter.

"I'll be seeing you very soon," he grinned as he left me at my apartment door.

I rushed in to relate the thrills of the evening to my mother. She and I shared the apartment. She had come on from Allston to chaperone me.

During the following two weeks Jack telephoned me

Here the Ziegfeld chorus girl who fell in love with Jack Diamond points out an inescapable moral—one she has learned in the bitter days since the notorious gangster got "his."

Kiki Roberts is shown here several years after the gay Follies days when she was under the spell of Jack Diamond's glamour and ill-gotten wealth. Diamond's photo was taken during one of his many court trials.

Loved a Gangster!

By Marion "Kiki" Roberts

every day. He wanted a date. I put him off each time as I did not want to appear too eager. In the days that followed he sent dozens of orchids to the apartment. Mother became curious.

Finally I decided that I had practiced long enough the wile of appearing indifferent. Besides I wanted to see this young man again. I wanted to see him smile and hear his line of smart phrases.

I accepted a date. He met me after the show and took me to a smart restaurant in Fifty-second Street. I don't think that police know it to this day, but Jack was part-owner of that restaurant. I found this out later.

All the waiters were most deferential when we entered the restaurant. I realized that my charming knight must be a wealthy man to afford such extravagances as lay before my eyes. Once the waiters went to work, our huge table seemed to be weighed down with every choice food and drink imaginable. Jack had invited dozens of his friends, men and women, to meet me. As I see it now, some of these men, and women too, appeared a bit shady.

That evening was divine. As he left me at my apartment door I knew that I was in love with him.

From that night on I saw Jack often from across the footlights. The Follies had closed and now I was dancing in Simple Simon. I was one of the six girls picked to dance a specialty number with Harriet Hoctor.

Every night the doorman would hand me a beautiful bouquet of orchids that Jack had sent. I was sure that he loved me also. Several nights a week I would find him sitting there in the first row. When the lights turned up, he would partly cover his face with his hands. I did not know then the chance he was taking for our love. Little did I realize that he was being dogged night and day by rival racketeers. How my heart pounded and my knees quivered when I saw Jack [*Please turn to page* 61]

Outcast

Roy Cramer was guiltless of this thing for which he was publicly condemned. But there was something else on his conscience—something that had to do with a girl's love and a man's blindness.

I HAD to tell the story of that night, that hideous and unforgettable night of cruel, useless tragedy, so many times and in so many ways and in answer to so many different questions, that it grew at the last almost mechanical. I just repeated the same things over and over and over, without feeling, in a stupid daze, practically without intelligence.

Yet I find in myself now, today, a shrinking reluctance to tell it again. I want to keep writing of other things, of Vee and of Lola and of myself, of anything which will put off reliving that night of horror.

So, though I must come to it finally for I cannot possibly tell my story without it, bear with me a little, while I talk first of events that came before, of other things—happier things.

Of, for instance, the night when I first met Lola.

It was at a country club dance. I was dancing with Vee Torrent, whom I'd brought. I'd been rushing Vee for all of two whole weeks—and I just chanced to look up to meet the arch gaze of a pair of bright, sapphire-blue eyes, looking at me from a small, flower-like face over some other chap's shoulder. Some lucky, lucky chap.

I gasped, "Who is that? That girl with the yellow hair?"

And Vee said, "That's Lola Court. Just home from school. Pretty, isn't she? Do you want to meet her?"

"Oh, if you get a chance," I answered carelessly. But my heart was saying, "That's the girl I'm going to marry. That's the girl I'm going to marry!"

And from that night on, Vee just ceased to count, beside Lola.

But no, hold on! That's not quite right. I still liked Vee immensely. I still thought she was lovely and fascinating and an awfully good sport. And I suppose her reputation of being "wild" added a certain lawless charm.

Naturally I knew, like everybody else, that it wasn't strange that Vee was wild, considering her mother. Mrs. Torrent was a perennial scandal in this small southern city. Poor lady, she was now that most awful of objects, a middle-aged siren, but she still went out with men, quite a lot of them.

As for Vee, any number of men were mad about her, but gossip said serious proposals were rather scarce.

"Were you *very* crazy about her, Roy?" Lola asked one night.

Well, "crazy" was exactly what I had been. But I'd only persuaded Lola to marry me a week before, and my

darling's little face was serious and her voice was wistful, so I dodged.

"I've never been in love with anybody till I met you, sweetheart," I said. "Word of honor."

Lola talked to me about a different girl on the night before tragedy struck my life. She had been a little silent, resting in my arms, her rose-flushed cheek against my shoulder, her sweet-pea face pensive. And finally I asked her what she was thinking about.

"You won't like it," she said, twisting one of my coat buttons in a pretty little way she had. "But I'm afraid I'm jealous again!

"It isn't Vee. You haven't seen her, I know. But you have seen Gwen. Lots. You, you took her to the circus last week. And plenty of friends keep saying, 'Who was that pretty little girl we met Roy with?'"

For a moment I was absolutely too dumfounded to speak. Gwen! Lola was talking about Gwen Rexford—it didn't seem possible! Little Gwen Rexford who went around with a crowd a generation younger than ours. She belonged to Neal's generation—Lola's kid brother's crowd.

"I never heard of such nonsense!" I shouted, when I had got my tongue. "Why, Gwen's an infant—a baby! I've watched her grow up. She's like my sister! Her mother and dad are good friends of mine. Of course I took her to the circus—and to the zoo, too—and I've bought her ice-cream cones and dolls! So what?"

"So stop shouting, darling. I'm convinced!" She kissed me, laughing; then she sobered again. "But all the same, Roy, I think maybe you should be a little more careful. No—wait, let me explain! The point is that just because, like you said, you've watched her grow up, you think she's still a baby—like you also said. But she isn't. Do you see what I mean?"

"No I don't," I grumbled.

But it was the very next night that I found out how right she was, and that Gwen was no longer a baby.

It began that evening which I can dodge no longer—with Gwen's knocking at my door about ten o'clock.

Even after what Lola had said,

Lola's mother barred my way, her face flaming. "Don't you touch her. You're no better than a murderer. Everybody knows what you did to little Gwen."

it never once occurred to me not to ask her in. You see, when I had first come to this flourishing little southern city from the North, six years before, I'd had a room in Earl and Iva Rexford's home. I'd come from a large northern firm to work in that firm's branch office here, and Earl was our attorney. He was only about ten years older than I—I was twenty-two then—Gwen was ten at that time.

Later, when I'd risen to be maanger of the branch and was able to afford an apartment of my own, I'd got a small one just across the hall from Earl and Iva's. They were like my own folks. And Gwen was like my kid sister. It seemed simply too fantastic and far-fetched for anybody to say I was "dating" Gwen. So I said, "Hi, kid! Come in," when I saw her now.

"Hello," Gwen said. "I saw your window all lit up, so I thought you must be home. But why aren't you with Lola?"

She was smiling, but not quite normally, maybe it was mostly her eyes —they looked over-bright and unnaturally dilated.

"Lola," I grinned, "is all worn out with trousseau-shopping."

"Why, Infant," I said, "what's wrong—the boy friend double-crossing you? Just give me his name and address, Honey, and I'll go gunning for him."

"Oh! Well, I'm coming in then. Mother and Dad have gone to a movie. Give me a drink, will you, Roy?"

"Certainly not," I said severely. "Not till you're twenty-eight like me. Nothing but ginger ale."

"Well, ginger ale then. No, wait a minute." She had flung herself in a chair and I went over to her. She said in a very small-girl voice, "I'm lonesome, sort of. I'd been out mailing a letter, and when I came back, I"—she stopped, choked. I put one hand under her chin and turned up her childish, pretty, little face and saw she was crying.

"Why, Infant!" I said tenderly, "what's wrong—the boy friend double-crossing you? Just give me his name and address, honey, and I'll go out gunning for him!"

Gwen laughed. "I'll bet you haven't even got a gun!" she said.

"Ah, that's all you know about it! I always keep one in my desk, just in case," I told her cheerfully, pleased that she had laughed.

JUST then the telephone rang, and when I answered, Lola's voice greeted me. "Darling," she cried, "Mother and I have spent a marvelous evening trying on all my new clothes! I can't wait for you to see them."

"I can't either," I said. How sweet she was, the darling!

"What are you doing? Are you alone? Were you thinking of me?"

Suddenly I remembered our conversation of the night before, and I thought, with a slight feeling of discomfort, "If I tell her Gwen is here, she may be getting foolish ideas. I'll wait and tell her tomorrow when I can make her understand." So I said, "Nothing. Yes. And yes!"

When I finally turned away I was smiling a little, and just for one second I had almost forgotten Gwen, so that I came out of my dream with a little wrench when I saw her there. She was fingering some magazines on the table.

"What about my ginger ale, Roy?" she said quickly.

"I'll get it right now. Could you manage a chicken sandwich, too?"

"That would be fine." For the second time that evening she came to me, and laid her cheek on my shoulder. She said very low, "You're sweet to me, Roy. You know how it is, when you feel all blue and everything—" and suddenly she raised her face and kissed me.

I kissed her back, as a man might kiss his young sister.

"Honey," I said, "there's a name for your kind of blues —you've just got a bad case of adolescence. We've all been through it."

And I kissed her again and eased her down into a big chair and told her, with blind, stupid, grown-up cheerfulness, to wait a minute and I'd bring her a feast. I can't forgive myself. I can't. I never will, for being so dumb, so unperceptive!

She smiled at me, her lips quivering a little, and rubbed my hand against her cheek, and I left her sitting in that big chair and went out to the kitchen.

I had taken out [*Please turn to page* 52]

A Teacher Confesses

I Wanted My Fling

There, with Bill so near me, with the cherry blossoms inviting romance, I wanted to forget I was a school teacher.

WHEN circumstances changed me from Sherry, popular co-ed, to Miss Ryder, English teacher, my new personality was simply an outward pose. I could wash the vivid make-up off my face. I could set my brown hair in smooth waves, instead of careless curls. But I couldn't keep the teasing laughter from curling my wide mouth, or the come-hither expression from lighting my blue eyes. Neither could I resist flirting with every man I met—if for no other reason than to convince myself that I hadn't lost my sex-appeal. All of which wouldn't have been wrong—or particularly dangerous—if I had saved my wiles for the few older and "eligible men" who lived in Pittsville. I didn't. I carried them into the classroom, getting by on my charm instead of the knowledge I had to offer. Even this might not have caused so much trouble—for there's at least one teacher like

myself in every high school—if it hadn't been for Ted Carthage. He was as different from the typical high-school boy as I was from the accepted picture of a member of the faculty.

I knew that he was T.N.T. from the first day he sauntered nonchalantly into my class fifteen minutes after the other pupils were seated.

"Sorry I'm late," he apologized, giving me a gay grin that was much too self-assured for a boy his age, "but I didn't know I was going to take your course. I wouldn't have, either, if one of the fellows hadn't told me that old man Pitkin had finally broken down and actually h i r e d a teacher under eighty."

It's hard to look stern and r e p r o v i n g when y o u ' r e only five-foot, young and full of life. But I hadn't been putting "fresh young men" in their places since my hair ribbon days for nothing. "Will you please take the last seat in the third row?" I said indifferently. "I'll get your name at the end of the class."

Then I deliberately turned my back on him and walked to my desk. I knew, of course, from his self-possessed manner and the delighted giggles of the class, that he was used to being treated as a "privileged character." But if he imagined he could use his impudence on me, he was in for a bitter lesson.

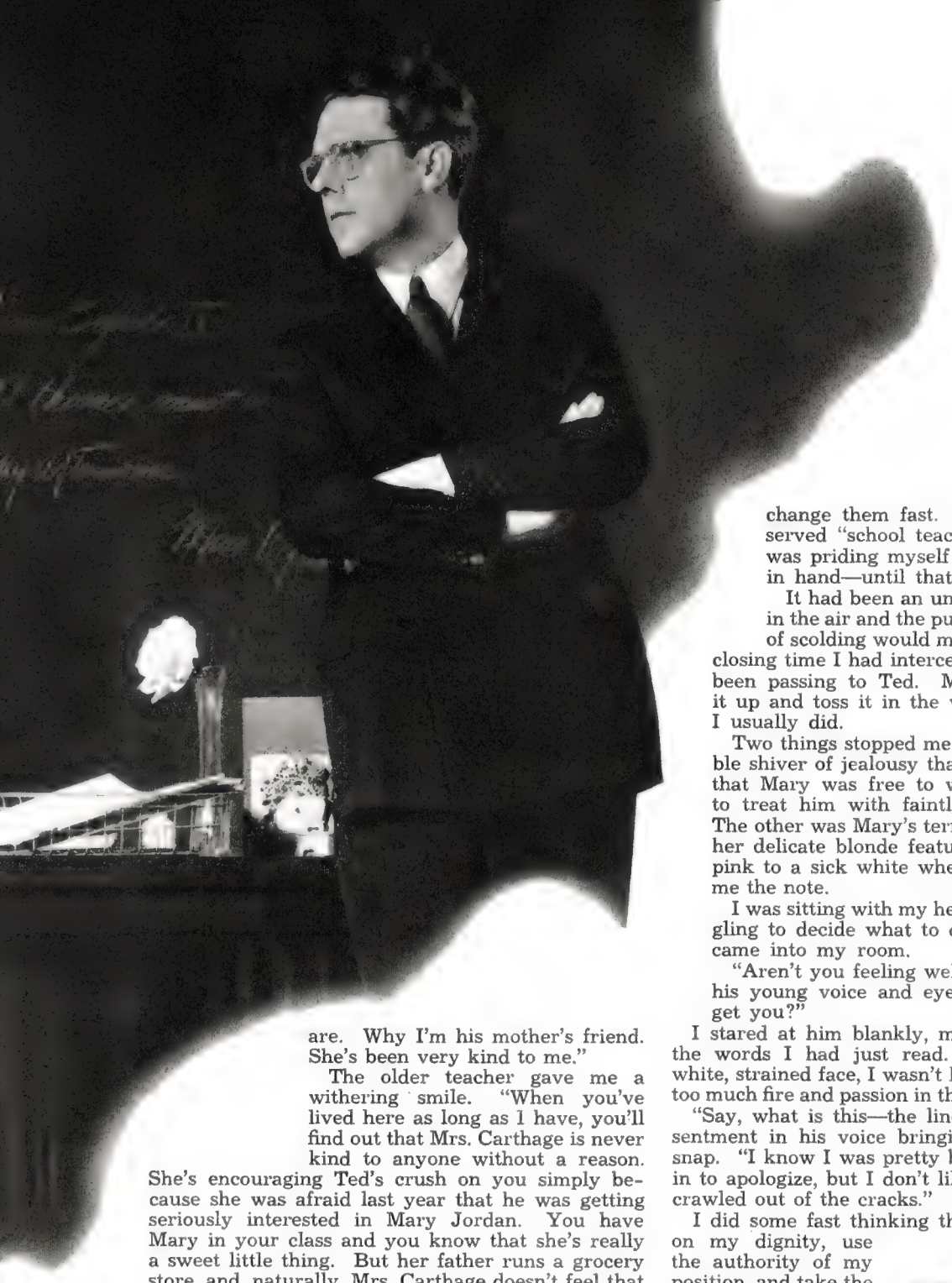
I knew he must have a good excuse for his behavior, since no ordinary student would have dared to speak so disrespectfully of Mr. Pitkin, the middle-aged principal of the high school. Not that that worried me. I had been hired by the superintendent himself. He had been an old friend of my father's. It was at Dad's funeral that he had suggested I come to Pittsville to teach. And I knew if I got into trouble, I could count on him for support. Still, it might be smart to watch my step.

In the months that followed, I did more than that, however. I deliberately set out to make Ted Carthage my adoring slave. Oh, I told myself there was nothing personal in my campaign to have him groveling at my feet—that I was simply being cagey. After all, he was the richest boy in town. His father had left the money to build the school in which I worked. His mother ruled the social life of the town. It would have been crazy to make an enemy out of him.

No, not even in the secrecy of my own thoughts did I admit that I was vamping him for the sheer kick I was getting out of it. When one of the teachers hinted as much, I very nearly flew into one of my blind rages I had been trying for years to control.

I still don't know how it happened. One instant, we were teacher and pupil. The next, I was crushed close to him. Then, when I tried to struggle free, he said, "Don't push me away. I want to marry you, Sherry." I was desperately trying to free myself when Mr. Pitkin walked in the room.

"Don't be so ridiculous," I snapped, my face going scarlet with the rush of furious blood to my head. "Ted Carthage is just a boy, and I'm no more interested in him than you



are. Why I'm his mother's friend. She's been very kind to me."

The older teacher gave me a withering smile. "When you've lived here as long as I have, you'll find out that Mrs. Carthage is never kind to anyone without a reason. She's encouraging Ted's crush on you simply because she was afraid last year that he was getting seriously interested in Mary Jordan. You have Mary in your class and you know that she's really a sweet little thing. But her father runs a grocery store, and, naturally, Mrs. Carthage doesn't feel that she's good enough for her son. What's more, if she thought you were considering Ted seriously, she'd be just as nasty to you."

"Well, she certainly doesn't have to worry about me," I flung back hotly. "I wouldn't have that spoiled kid if he had a million."

I STALKED from the room, recklessly banging the door behind me.

But when my anger cooled, some of my bravado went with it. Had I really been trying to use my own methods of managing a difficult pupil or had I subconsciously been trying to attract a charming person? For there was no denying Ted's charm.

His hazel eyes, deep set and fringed with thick black lashes, were sparkling with life and the fun of living. His quick, impish grin was sweet and disarming. Yes, I was interested in Ted as a man. I hadn't gotten much attention in this little town. Now I knew I'd better change my tactics — and change them fast. So I tried a new, aloof, reserved "school teacherish" manner with Ted. I was priding myself that I had the situation well in hand—until that one day.

It had been an unusually hard day, with spring in the air and the pupils so restless that no amount of scolding would make them behave. Just before closing time I had intercepted a note Mary Jordan had been passing to Ted. My first impulse was to tear it up and toss it in the wastebasket. That was what I usually did.

Two things stopped me. One—the swift, unreasonable shiver of jealousy that ran over me at the thought that Mary was free to write Ted notes, while I had to treat him with faintly contemptuous disapproval. The other was Mary's terrified expression, and the way her delicate blonde features had gone from a flushed pink to a sick white when I had demanded she bring me the note.

I was sitting with my head bowed in my hands, struggling to decide what to do about the note, when Ted came into my room.

"Aren't you feeling well?" he asked, real concern in his young voice and eyes. "Is there anything I can get you?"

I stared at him blankly, measuring him in the light of the words I had just read. And, remembering Mary's white, strained face, I wasn't liking what I saw. There was too much fire and passion in that finely cut, still-boyish face.

"Say, what is this—the line-up?" he burst out, the resentment in his voice bringing me to my senses with a snap. "I know I was pretty bad in class today and I came in to apologize, but I don't like being stared at as if I had crawled out of the cracks."

I did some fast thinking then. I could play safe, stand on my dignity, use the authority of my position, and take the note straight to Mr. Pitkin. That would mean that Mary would probably be expelled and the whole thing would be out of my hands. Yet, if I did that I

[*Please turn to page* 40]

Suppose you were a teacher and your pupil—only two years younger than yourself—fell in love with you. What would you have done? Do you condemn the girl who tells this story?

"Don't fall for truckers," she was told. "They're like sailors—a sweetheart at every stop!" But Gladys did fall for a trucker—because names they casually mentioned—Miami, New York, and Montreal—meant glamour and romance to a girl eager for adventure.

MAYBE if I'd been a little older and wiser, cross-country trucking wouldn't have seemed so glamorous to me. But I was glamour struck. I was fed up with waiting on table under mother's vigilant eyes. I was tired of going home to that two-room apartment and hearing my thirty-six-year-old mother and my sixty-year-old stepfather squabbling, night after night.

It wasn't much of a life for a nineteen-year-old girl. But then I'd never had much of a life. I was a war baby. The day I was born word arrived that my father had died "Over There."

I think everything that was young and sweet in my seventeen-year-old mother must have dried up then and there. She only told me about it once. But I can't forget.

She went all soft, the way I'd always dreamed a mother should look when she told me, "Gee, I was tickled with you, Kid! I kept imagining how your father would feel when he'd see you! And how he'd grin when you'd twine that fat little fist of yours around his big finger. And then I'd think of the way he'd look at me, and—well, all the pain the night before didn't mean a thing. It would make Mac so happy!"

"I even thought of having another baby," she said softly. "I thought as soon as he got home again, we'd go in for raising a family in a big way. And then they brought me the news."

Even telling it, her face went hard, and her voice had that

Buss looked at me. Really looked at me, I mean, as if he were seeing me for the first time as a human being. "Say—" he sounded surprised, "you're just a kid, aren't you?"

Runaway Romance

I went red under his frank scrutiny. I grinned back. I hadn't meant to. He looked like a big boy to me—the kind of a person I'd have met if I hadn't been such a fool over Harold Beller.

old familiar brittleness when she said, "I knew I'd have to scratch, then. I couldn't even afford a splurge of weeps. You see, your father hadn't a chance to marry me before he went over there. He wanted to. There just wasn't time. So there wasn't even insurance. I could just put you in the home and get to work."

So that explained the drab asylum that was my childhood background and those disappointing visits from a mother who asked me to call her Cora, and who called me "kid" instead of "darling," when I ached so to be called "darling."

I realize now, how she had to fight sentiment to keep from cracking. Underneath she loved me. That's why she married a man thirty years her senior when I was sixteen.

"I'll be able to take it easy now, Kid!" she told me that tremendous day when she brought to the orphanage the magically shining satin dress from a bargain basement, and the patent leather pumps that I loved, even though they did make me limp a little. "And I'm going to give you a break, Gladys. Won't it be swell to have a home of our own?"

SWELL? You have to be raised in an orphanage to understand the awed wonder the very word "home" can bring. Those two rooms, crowded with frilly pillows and lace doilies, seemed the most beautiful place in the world. Even old Ralph Hanson, my brand new stepfather, [*Please turn to page* 77]

Secrets of a Barge Girl

The story thus far:

I WAS brought up by my father in a little out-of-the-way island in the Pacific. I had never known any other home except the fishing barge and the shack on the island, and I had never talked to any other men but Father. When he died, I was quite alone. Mat Slattery came to the island to claim the barge he had bought from Dad's agents and found me there.

Knowing nothing of love, I let Mat make love to me. I had dreamed long of the man who would be my husband, and written many thoughts about him in my diary. But the love Mat showed me was cruel and unlike my dreams.

I was still sick over my dreams end when I started in my motor boat for the city next day, in the first visit I'd ever made there alone. I bought a lot of things I'd always wanted, and then went back to my island. When I entered the shack I realized that someone had slept in my bed, someone had read my diary—all those dreams I'd written down before I met Mat Slattery.

I read with shame the note the stranger had left there, "I think you would forgive me for reading what no one was supposed to see, if you knew that it has made me want to believe in love again—Thorne." And then I couldn't resist writing in my diary how wrong I had been about dreams and men and love. I thought, how different this man Thorne must be.

I had already promised Mat Slattery I would work with him in transforming the barge to a floating night club. I was to be a cigarette girl. But when I took over the job, I learned just what it meant—gambling, drinking, and yes, I was even expected to let other men make love to me.

Heartsick, I changed to my old clothes, and in my own old motor boat sped away as fast as I could from the barge, which had been anchored several miles off the coast. I headed in the direction of the island, and so crazed with the thought of escape that I didn't notice how rough the water had grown. I was facing a wild wind that grew stronger as I neared the island.

I don't quite remember when the boat capsized or how far I swam in that awful gale. I only remember I saw a mysterious light where the shack should be. A yacht was anchored there. There must be someone on it. I tried to shout, praying my voice would reach the boat.

I screamed again, and then, dim and far off, I heard an answering shout. If only I could keep swimming, and stay afloat. But I was losing consciousness fast.

Now go on with the story:

PART II

I BECAME gradually conscious of a sense of warmth and security. Strong, hard hands were rubbing my arms and legs, and a deep, gentle voice was telling me over and over that everything was going to be all right. Slowly I opened my eyes and could make out the vague outline of a man. He was bending over me, but I could not distinguish his features.

"Drink this," he said, and held something hot and strong to my lips.

I could still seem to hear the roar of the sea in my ears and feel the waves beating against my body. I felt strong arms around me. Groping as through a fog, I finally could make out that I was lying in my own bunk in the shack and that a roaring fire had been built in the grate.

As my vision cleared I saw a man wearing a white duck suit. I dared not look up into his face. I dared not find

myself in Mat Slattery's arms again. But this couldn't be Mat. This man was kind and protective. And when I looked up into a pair of very blue eyes, and the lean, goodlooking face of a stranger, I breathed a sigh of relief. This stranger was taking care of me. I was safe.

All the familiar things in the room seemed strange, as if I'd come back from a long distance. Then my eyes finally settled upon my diary which lay open on the desk. A pen rested close beside it, as if someone had just put it down. Always I had kept that book hidden inside the desk. No one should have read it, especially not those last paragraphs which told so bitterly of my broken dreams.

With a choked cry I tried to get up and reach it, but fell back on the bed again. Pains darted up and down my legs and my head throbbed dizzily.

"Are you—Thorne?" I whispered.

His face crinkled into a broad, relieved smile. "So you've snapped out of it at last," he said. "That's great! You had me worried for a while. Sure, I'm Thorne—Thorne Crandall—and you must be—Carla."

He knew, of course, because he had read the diary—knew that and so terribly much more.

"You shouldn't have read it," I declared, and tried to reach the book again.

"I know," he said, "but I couldn't stop." He put the diary under my pillow and gently lifted me back to the bed. "While I was reading these last pages I committed murder a dozen times in my soul. Someday I'm going to get my hands on that devil. But right now, tell me what you were doing out there in the middle of the Pacific! Do you realize what might have happened if I hadn't been on my way to the yacht right then?"

"Yes," I said with a shiver. "I couldn't have gone any farther. You saved my life."

"Did that chap you wrote about have anything to do with you being out there?"

His eyes were fixed with a grave steadiness on my

[*Please turn to page* 64]

I could still seem to hear the roar of the sea in my ears and feel the waves beating against my body. And then I felt strong arms around me—I was safe.

IN THE middle of our talk about the latest "Cora Lee" ad, Keith Malton broke off and said, "Miss Shafer—Polly, how about struggling through dinner with me tonight?" And I, who prided myself on my sophistication and the poise that it had taken me years to acquire, felt myself flushing and tingling all over.

I said, "Why—why, yes, I'd love to," and walked out of his office because I was flustered and a little dazed, and wanted to pull myself together. For Keith was the head of the prosperous Malton Advertising Agency. He was only thirty, a bachelor, and handsome and charming besides. Like most of the girls I had a "crush" on him.

I went into my own office, feeling alive and tingling and light-headed, and found Art Howell there. He was sitting beside my desk with some drawings spread out before him. I thought he looked a little worried, but he stood up and gave me his nice, rather shy smile, and I forgot about it for the moment.

He said, "I wanted you to see the drawings before I take them in to the art director. Do they tie up with your copy the way you want?" He sat down and brushed a hand over his eyes. "I've been a little upset lately, and when I have things on my mind it sort of affects my work. I hope they're what you want, though."

I thought, "A little wife trouble, no doubt," and I wanted to reach out and comfort him. He was too swell a person, and too sensitive, to have the wrong kind of wife. And Mr. White, the art director, had told me that Claire Howell was definitely the wrong kind of wife for Art. I had seen her once in the office when she came to deliver some drawings for Art, and I had looked at her carefully. She was a very pretty, fragile, blonde girl with large appealing eyes. I had thought, "I'll bet she's a selfish, mean, little thing under all that fragility." But I had decided I was being catty, because I liked Art so much.

I handled the "Cora Lee" cosmetic line for the agency, writing the copy and attending to all the details. When we started our first big advertising campaign, the art director brought in Art Howell, who was to do the illustrations. At that first meeting I had thought, "Here's a man I could like a lot." Then I had learned he was married, and I said to myself, "Don't be a fool, Polly. After struggling to get where you are, don't spoil it all by falling for a married man."

I could have wept for Art Howell, because he was too fine to be unhappy; and my expression must have shown something of what I felt because he smiled at me, a little ruefully, and said, "Forget it." Then, seriously, "You're a grand person, Polly. I admire you so much. You're smart. You've accomplished things. You're a successful business woman, and you manage to be charming and very attractive besides. You're a lucky girl."

I smiled then, thinking of Keith's invitation, and I said, "Yes, I guess I am lucky." And I thought to myself, "Of course I'm lucky. I have a good job; I make sixty dollars a week. I'm a far cry from that shabby little unattractive wallflower of a girl who decided she'd have to make something of herself if she wanted any attention."

But I didn't want to think of that then, so I said, "The drawings are fine, Art. Just what I want. Take them in to Mr. White."

At the door he turned and said, "I don't suppose you'd have dinner with me tonight, would you?"

It was funny what a shock that gave me. It made my heart start to pound swiftly. But I managed to say, "Why, no. I'm sorry, but I can't, Art."

He grinned crookedly. "My wife won't mind, if that's what you're worrying about. Anyway, she's away for a few days."

"Don't be silly. That's not it at all. I have another engagement for tonight."

I Paid

I flung myself on the couch, and for the first time, wept before him. He spoke to me, and his voice sounded strange. "I guess I've been a champion heel. I'll do anything you want, Polly."

Divorce always means ugliness. This girl feels others may profit by her experience with the alimony racket, and we have agreed to present her story.

"Well, I don't blame you," he said. "I have a nerve asking you to waste your time on me."

After he had gone I thought, "I'm sorry, Art. Really sorry I can't be with you tonight. But perhaps it's just as well. Because I might get to like you too much, and that would be stupid. Besides, there's Keith. I'm seeing him tonight, and I'm thrilled and excited. Maybe we'll fall in love with each other, and then I'll be really lucky. Then I will have reached the top I've been aiming for."

I SAT there for a long time thinking of the road over which I had traveled to arrive at this point. A hard stony road it had been. Art Howell had called me lucky, but he didn't know how little luck had to do with it. It hadn't been luck to be born a not particularly attractive girl to poor parents. I had known loneliness and humiliation before I decided to do something about myself. During high school vacations I studied stenography and journalism. Then, after graduation I boldly told the family I was going to New York.

After nine years in New York I was working for the Malton Agency at sixty dollars a week, and living in a smart one-room apartment on Park Avenue. It made me a little melancholy to think of that bitter, hard struggle. I pushed the thoughts from me so I could be gay again and look forward to my evening with Keith.

We had fun that first evening. I went home from the office and changed to my zippiest evening frock. When Keith arrived we beamed at each other in mutual admiration. He said, "Gosh, you look slick," almost in surprise.

I said flippantly, "You're smooth, too."

We had dinner at the Prentiss Club, and later went to El Todo, and then to Ricci's. We laughed a great deal, and talked a lot of nonsense. [*Please turn to page* 68]

His Alimony...

Posed by Sonja Henie

I Wanted My Fling

[*Continued from page 33*]

would be labeling Mary "bad," when in my innermost heart, I was sure she was merely foolish.

I was four years older than she, and years wiser. Surely, I was better equipped to handle the situation. Rashly I made up my mind at least to try.

I crumpled her note in my hand and smiled up into Ted's eyes. "Have you courage enough to be honest?" I asked. And when he nodded a bit uncertainly, "Then tell me something. Are you in love with Mary Jordan? Is she—I mean, have you—?"

Instead of answering my embarrassed, stammering appeal, he lit a cigarette, although he knew it was against the rules to smoke in the school building. He took a couple of deep drags and said, "I don't know what you're hinting, Miss Ryder, but if it's what I think it is, you're all wrong. Mary's a good kid, one of the few in this school, as a matter of fact. I can tell you that she's absolutely on the level and I ought to know."

Inwardly, I drew a big sigh of relief. If I made a mistake now, I might involve the school in a nasty scandal. And there was that note—that incredibly damning note—still to be explained. For when a girl writes: "I'll do anything—anything you ask—if you'll only come to see me," she's asking for trouble.

Almost as if he were following my train of thought, Ted went on, "If there was something in that note you took today, just forget about it. I give you my word of honor that there was nothing between us."

I believed him. Ted might be spoiled, arrogant, selfish even, but underneath it all he was all right. I stood up, meaning to dismiss him.

I still don't know how it happened. One instant, we were teacher and pupil. The next, I was crushed close to him.

"Sherry. Oh, Sherry darling," he whispered brokenly. "Don't you know that I couldn't do anything wrong when it's you I love." And when I tried to struggle, "Don't push me away, please. I love you, Sherry. I want to marry you. I—"

HIS mouth, clean, sweet, yet burning with hungry desire, crushed down on mine. I could feel his heart thundering against the hands I had pressed frantically against his chest. That didn't frighten me. Plenty other boys had made love to me. Other hearts had beat faster because I was close. What threw me into a panic was the response I felt for this boy. Why, I was almost kissing him back!

I was fighting for breath, desperately trying to free myself. when Mr. Pitkin walked in the room.

"I would like to see you in my private office, Miss Ryder," he said, fixing me with his customary cold stare. "You may be dismissed now, Ted," he went on.

I'll never forget the shame and fear of that moment. I followed Mr. Pitkin into his private office, bracing myself for the ordeal ahead, knowing I could say nothing to justify the betraying scene he must have understood.

"I came to your room to let you know you have been elected to chaperon a group of senior students on their annual visit to the Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington—a group of students that will include Ted Carthage," he said in his cold manner. "Of course, you realize that after what has just happened I could hardly endorse this choice, but since it has always been the custom to let the students elect their own chaperon, there is nothing I can do about it now."

I knew what was behind his words—he wasn't protecting me; he was protecting Mrs. Carthage, and the Parent Teachers' Association, and his own reputation as a principal. I sat silent as he went on. "I would like to offer a few words of advice, Miss Ryder. You'll find it doesn't pay to be—" his long, thin nose actually seemed to quiver—"too intimate with your pupils. I hope you'll remember that when you are in Washington. I think you're wise enough not to let this happen again."

"If you don't believe I am capable of managing the trip, I had better refuse. I agree with you that one of the older teachers would probably be much more reliable," I told him.

He stood up, towering above me. "You can't refuse without causing a lot of gossip in the town. I'm counting on your good sense. So if you'll please be ready by Wednesday, I'll take care of the tickets and reservations."

I was ready, all right. But as I got on the train, twelve laughing, hilarious, young people trailing at my heels, I felt exactly like an animal trainer, transporting a cage of savage beasts from one town to another.

My good sense told me that I was letting my imagination run riot. Just because Ted's fat, fussy little mother had waylaid me as I was getting on the train was no cause for worry. "You'll take good care of my boy, won't you, Miss Ryder?" she had begged. "He's all I have in the world."

That hadn't really upset me. I was used to Mrs. Carthage's gushing motherliness. But the sight of Mary Jordon's gaunt, poorly dressed father, standing shyly on the outskirts of the crowd, had gotten under my skin. I knew, as did everyone in town, that he couldn't really afford to send her on this trip. But he was so proud of her, and determined that she should have everything the others had. His tired, patient eyes followed her slim, fair-haired figure with such blind adoration that—remembering her reckless little note—I went sick all over. And I determined that no matter what happened to me—or my job—I wouldn't let anything occur to wipe that radiant pride from her father's gentle face.

So, instead of snubbing Ted, I subtly played up to him all during the trip. It was risky business, but it was safer than allowing him to be alone with Mary in her present state of mind.

By the time we had arrived in Washington and everyone was settled for the night, I was shaking with nervous exhaustion. I knew I should go in and talk to Mary, whom I had insisted on taking the room connecting mine, so I could keep an eye on her. Yet what could I say? Would she listen to me if I tried to give her a lecture on morals and virtue? I, who had unthinkingly fanned Ted's schoolboy crush into an emotion that was fast becoming deep and dangerous.

I didn't like the idea, but I knew it was true. I was nervously pacing the floor, lost in a world of problems, when someone tapped on the door. I grabbed up my white wool robe and went to answer.

Ted stepped inside. His cheeks were flushed, his eyes sparkling with a recklessness I had never seen before.

"Sherry. Oh, Sherry, darling." He grabbed me and kissed me before I could stop him. "You knew I'd come. You were waiting for me, weren't you? I knew when you were so sweet to me all day that it meant you loved me, that your coldness was just a pose, that you wanted me as much as I—"

My hand clamped across his mouth, hard. "Shut up, you fool! Don't you know that Mary's in the next room? Do you want to cause a scandal that would ruin both of us?"

"There wouldn't be any scandal—Sherry," he said. His voice was a man's voice, reproachful, but strong. "We could slip over to Maryland in the morning and be married immediately. Nobody would dare talk about my wife. You ought to know that, Sherry. Not even Mother could do anything then."

HIS arms tightened convulsively. His body was trembling against mine. A flash of almost overwhelming temptation swept over me. Suppose I gave in to the curious, drugged languor that was creeping from head to foot? Suppose I were to offer him the lips that were throbbing with the desire to crush themselves against his clean, young mouth? Right or wrong, it's always thrilling to know a man loves you as Ted seemed to love me. And in the morning, we could be married. I didn't look any older than Ted; I wasn't much—just two years. Then, even as my mind and emotions warred, I heard Mary open the door to the bathroom that connected our rooms.

"Get out! Get out, please," I begged frantically. "We'll talk in the morning, but we mustn't let Mary see us like this. We mustn't."

Strangely enough, he went. I was still standing, staring blankly at the door he had just closed, my hands pressed against my aching throat, when I heard Mary go back into her own room and crawl into bed.

There was no chance to talk in the morning, however. Mary and Ted might be the only students who were important to me personally, but the others were equally my responsibility as a teacher. It was my job to see that they saw all the important state buildings in Washington as well as the more colorful Cherry Blossom Festival. So, as soon as breakfast was over, I got them in line and we started on a tour of the government buildings.

It was in one of them that I bumped into Bill Fortune. The instant I saw his plain, yet attractive, face my mind stopped going round and round like a senseless pinwheel. Once again I was Sherry, the co-ed, with Miss Ryder, English teacher, and all her problems completely forgotten for the moment.

"Bill Fortune, you old darling," I cried, giving him the full benefit of my almost-

forgotten "I-think-you're-wonderful" smile that had played so big a part in my college popularity. "What on earth are you doing in Washington?"

He caught my hands, his warm brown eyes smiling companionably down at me, as they had smiled so many times before. "I might ask the same thing about you. After all, you're the one who disappeared without a single word to all your old friends." Just then he caught sight of the obviously interested, embarrassingly silent little group behind me, and leaned close to whisper in my ear, "Don't look now, but I think there's something in back of you."

I touched a silencing finger to my red lips. "Shh—," I warned. "Never breathe it to a soul, but those are—" I dropped my lashes in mock humility—"my children."

It was all nonsense, of course. The sort of chatter we carried on for four years as we roamed our way through one class after another. But it was strange how it brought my sense of values back, all in a rush.

"Well since we're getting confidential," Jeff went on in the same vein, "I may as well give you my confession. I work here! I'm getting my Master's at the University and I pick up breakfast money showing lovely ladies—and their twelve children—the sights. So, shall we begin our tour, Mrs.—."

"Miss Ryder," I corrected severely. "You didn't think I would be old-fashioned enough to get married, did you?"

It wasn't until I caught sight of Ted's eyes blazing black in his white, set face, that I stopped to consider how our conversation might sound to the students—particularly to Ted. He would never forgive me for labeling him—even in jest—as my child. For one terrifying minute I thought he was going to spring at Bill's throat. I was too frightened to utter the few light words that might save a sickening scene. Fortunately, Bill, with his unshakable serenity, stepped into the breach.

"I'm the guide here," he said courteously. "Is there anything in particular you people would like to see, or shall we just start at the bottom and work our way up to the top?"

Then he tactfully attached himself to the side of the plainest girl and led her toward the rooms at the end of the lobby. I fell in step beside Ted.

It was Bill who really brought me to my senses. Since he had no plans for the afternoon, he had insisted on coming to the Cherry Blossom Festival with us. While the others went ahead, he kept me behind.

"Say, what is this setup, anyhow?" he demanded with brutal frankness. "I always knew you were an awful flirt, Sherry, but I gave you credit for picking on a victim worthy of your attack. That kid's already crazy about you. Are you leading him on just so you can watch him squirm? It's not like you to be either heartless—or cheap."

The happy, contented mood that had enveloped me since the instant I had seen Bill again rippled away in a cold shiver. It was the first time I had ever heard Bill criticize me. I knew I'd done plenty things he hadn't approved of—yet he had understood the crazy streak in me that prompted those episodes. He had gone on being my best pal all through college. When Dad's unexpected death had suddenly turned my world upside down. Bill was one of the few I'd really missed. Although stubborn, perverse pride had refused to let me even write to him about my sudden poverty, still, deep inside, I had felt that when, and if, we did meet again, we would have the same old friendship.

Now he was staring at me like a stranger. Tears stung my eyes, and my lips began to tremble. Instantly Bill's arms were around me.

"Don't—don't, Sherry, darling," he begged. "I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. I wouldn't do that—not for ten dozen nice little kids."

"I know," I said shakily. "But you were perfectly right. Only you don't understand everything."

I told him the whole story, sparing nobody, least of all, myself. When I had finished, he rose and pulled me to my feet. "You'd better go and see what's happened to your problem children. I'll be along in a minute. I'd like to think something through first."

I WALKED along, and for the first time, I lifted my eyes and really saw the glorious spectacle that was the reason for my being here in Washington. The cherry trees blooming above me were a symbol of new hope and faith to me.

Flinging back my head, I breathed in the warm spring air that every now and then swept a shower of pink petals from the low trees to the pansy-bordered path below. Around me, girls, hatless and dressed in bright spring prints, were strolling arm in arm. Sailors, with their white, jaunty caps over touseled hair looked over the girls passing by. I shut my eyes and drew a deep breath. The fragrance of a thousand flowers and that unnameable fragrance that belongs only to spring itself, rushed against my face. It was thus that Ted found me.

"Golly—you're beautiful." The hushed adoration in his voice brought me back to earth. "I want to remember you like that, with these blossoms all around you."

A shadow slid over the world that a second before had been so lovely and serene. I caught his arm, shaking it roughly. "What are you talking about, Ted? What do you mean—remember me?"

"Nothing but nonsense," he flung back, mimicking my bright tone of the morning. "And now we'll have to hurry or we're going to miss seeing the Japanese ambassador." He caught my hand and pulled me along the path. He was laughing so gaily that I felt my fears of the moment before were foolish. Particularly when, as we passed a sailor and his girl embracing on a park bench, he cried out, "Oh, boy, for the life of a sailor." Surely if he had been really upset or jealous, he couldn't be so facetious.

Bill didn't join us at the festival, and to this day it remains just a blur of children in white dresses, and the intoxicating smell of heavy, heady blossoms. But when I got back to the hotel and found a note from him, I was relieved. I couldn't have stood to have Bill despise me.

"As soon as you've tucked the babes in bed," he wrote, "give me a ring. We'll go out on a spree. You need it, as well as a good lecture. And I seem to be elected. Your eternally faithful, Bill."

I WAITED till I felt sure my charges were all in bed, then I called Bill's apartment. It was like seeing the sun come out on a rainy day, to hear his comfortable, drawling voice.

I knew I shouldn't have called him. I had no right to sneak away, leaving my responsibilities. But I salved my conscience by saying that going with Bill was really a duty, just talking to him had made me see how near I had come to making a complete fool of myself with Ted. Tonight he might be able to show me how I could manage things without hurting anyone very seriously.

I was beginning to be scared about Ted. He had scarcely taken his eyes off me all evening, and there had been something so bitter and reckless in their expression that I shivered every time I caught it. But the thing that disturbed me most was that he hadn't come near me. He simply stared as if he were looking at something that fascinated him, but that he hated. I wanted to tell Bill about it. I had to have his advice.

I called all the rooms to make sure that everyone was in, then I slipped downstairs. Bill was waiting out front in the same old Ford that he had driven all during college.

"We're going to drive around the Capitol," he said, his quick glance taking in my worried frown. "I want you to see it with the lights on. In the meantime, sit back and relax. You're wound up too tightly to talk now, Sherry."

I knew he was right. The nervous strain of the past few days had been too much—coming on top of months of struggling to adapt myself to a new and uncongenial world. I needed desperately to be gay and young and carefree again, if only for a few hours. I rested my bare head against the back of the seat and stared with vague eyes at the white dome of the Capitol. Surrounded by bright searchlights that made the sky above a rich, theatrical blue, it looked like the setting for a play. It couldn't be real.

Neither were the rows and rows of cherry trees that lined the speedway leading to Potomac Park. The silver moonlight had changed them from delicate pink to ghostly sentinels, standing at attention before the distant spire of the Washington monument. Between them I could catch glimpses of the cars moving back and forth on the bridge to Arlington. Only the soft, stirring fragrance of the blossoms was real and tangible, the same as it had been this morning.

I touched Bill's arm. "Let's get out and walk under the trees. I want to bury my face in those petals, just to convince myself that I'm not imagining something so—so excitingly beautiful."

He grinned, but at the first turn he parked the car. Hand in hand we wandered aimlessly about, talking in snatches, or losing ourselves in the flower-filled magic of the night. A low hanging branch brushed my head. Bill recklessly broke off a spray of blossoms and tucked it in my hair. "I'll probably be arrested if anyone saw me, but it will be worth it to see you looking like a funny little Japanese doll."

I nestled closer to him, happy for the first time since the awful morning I had come in and found my adored father dead on the living room floor. I didn't want to talk. I didn't want to think. I would have strolled on for hours if Bill hadn't pulled me to a bench, imprisoning my hands in his. There with Bill so near me, with the cherry blossoms inviting romance, I wanted to forget I was a school teacher.

"I've been thinking about you all day, Sherry," he said, his voice suddenly serious and sober. "And frankly, I still don't know what to do, what advice to give.

Because you're one of the finest people I've ever known—and one of the most dangerous.

"Everything you have, you have to excess. Pride, high-spirits, temper, passion." And when my dreamy gaze flew wide. "It's true, sweet. You're too high-powered for your own, or anyone else's, safety. In a small town, with the rigid code of behavior demanded of a teacher, you're dynamite—particularly to a boy like Ted."

Horrified, I stared at him. But before I had a chance to voice my outraged protest, he had jerked me to him and captured my lips with his. When I tried to struggle, he simply held me closer, crushing my mouth till it hurt. There was nothing of the gentle, easy-going Bill I had known in his kiss. It was almost savage in its demands. Yet it was arousing in me a depth of feeling and emotion that seemed impossible to check. I gave a helpless little sob, and relaxed against him.

"Sherry—" He cupped my chin with a shaking hand. He sounded breathless, almost scared. "Do you—I mean—" A cloud drifted lazily across the white moon, shutting away a clear picture of his eyes. Dimly I sensed there had been something desperate, pleading in them, some question he was begging me to answer. I would answer it later. Now I wanted nothing more than his kiss. I lifted my lips.

With a groan, he took them. "Dearest. Beloved," his voice was far away, drowned by the roar of my pulsing blood, "will you come with me? Will you stay with me—tonight. They'll never know—"

CRACK! Just like that the swift, electric current that was flowing between us, snapped. There was such an awful pain in my heart that I wondered sickly why it didn't stop beating.

How crazy and unexpected are the ways and means of love. How ironical that a man's insult could make a woman realize she cared. Because in a blinding moment I knew I must love Bill. No other emotion could make anyone suffer as I was suffering at the knowledge that he thought I was bad.

But big as my hurt was, my pride was bigger. With a gigantic effort, I forced my old, mocking, teasing smile to my lips. "Thanks for the invitation, Bill, but I'm afraid I can't accept—tonight. I've got to get back to my children."

I glanced at the watch on my wrist. "Heavens, it's nearly three. We've got to dash."

We didn't talk at all on the drive back to the hotel. I sat huddled in my corner, watching the passing landscape with eyes that saw nothing. They were looking inside and not being very proud of the girl they saw. A certain native honesty was making me admit that Bill had had good reason to believe that I was "easy." At college I had foolishly, but deliberately, played up the idea that I knew my way around. He'd seen the way I'd acted with Ted.

Bill's set, aloof expression choked off any thought of appeal. I fought back my tears when I left him. My one desire was to get in bed, to hide my shame in solitude and darkness.

I didn't get to bed that night. I knew I wasn't going to, the instant I unlocked my door, for Mary, her white face streaked with tears, sprang forward and caught my arm.

"Read this. Read it, I say," she screamed hysterically, thrusting a crumpled note into my hand. "Tell me where he is, what he's done. If anything's happened to him. I—I'll, kill you. You——You—"

I pushed Mary into the bathroom. "Wash your face in cold water," I commanded. "It won't help for you to have hysterics."

I knew before I opened the note that it was from Ted. My eyes flew over the bitter, damning words. He said he knew I had simply been playing him for a sucker. He accused me of having arranged for Bill to be in Washington, so we could be together again. "I saw you sneaking away with your lover," he wrote, "and I'll hate you to the last hour I live." There was more of that, and then, "But you'll never have another chance to laugh at me because you'll never see me again."

"Is he—is he—dead?" Mary asked with an awful quietness, coming out of the bathroom.

Like a flash my mind began to work again! Mrs. Carthage saying, "Take good care of my boy. He is all I have in the world." Mr. Pitkin, denouncing my every action. Mary Jordan threatening to kill me. "Bill, Bill, you must help me," I cried as I called him on the phone—all our own misunderstandings lost in the face of stark reality.

But while I was waiting, I had to do something quickly. I had to find Ted. I ordered Mary to keep phoning his room every fifteen minutes. Poor Mary who was so terribly in love with Ted. "Don't worry," I tried to smile through stiff lips, "he's simply trying to frighten us. There's too much good in Ted for him to do anything wrong."

She nodded gamely. "I'm sorry I lost my head, Miss Ryder, but Ted acted so crazy all day, I got to worrying about it and couldn't sleep. I came in here to talk to you and you were gone. Then I saw the note. I recognized Ted's handwriting and I—I got scared."

"I know," I went over and touched her hand. "But I promise you that everything will be all right."

I was desperately hanging on to my self-control. But when I met Bill in the lobby an hour later, I forgot my resolve to be brave. I forgot everything but that Bill was here. He would help me. He would find Ted.

"From all you've told me of the boy, he isn't the type that would commit suicide," he said practically. "He's probably in a bar, getting roaring drunk. We'll call the hospitals and the police, then we'll start making the rounds of the places that are still open."

The next five hours were a nightmare that will always leave a scar on my soul. If it hadn't been for Bill's steadying arms around me, I don't know what I would have done. He forced hot coffee and brandy down my frozen throat. He made me talk to keep from thinking. He bullied me into self-control. And he taught me how deep and lasting my love for him was. No mere physical attraction. No foolish desire to make him my slave, but an emotion that would walk with me to the rest of my days.

If he didn't care, I wouldn't want to go on. And he wouldn't care, no matter how much I protested my innocence, if anything had happened to Ted. He could forgive me a lot of silliness, but he would never be able to forget that I had caused a boy's—death!

That was why I went all to pieces when we finally got the word that they had located Ted. He had enlisted in the Navy. He was at one of their Bases; and he didn't want to see any of us.

Ted saw us all right. And Bill told him a few straight facts that I'm sure he will never forget. I know I won't. Anyhow, Ted apologized for all the trouble he had caused, and admitted that he had always wanted to go to sea. It was all done in such a man-to-man manner that I felt I had no part in it till Bill led me outside.

Then he took me in his arms. "Go ahead and cry and get it over with," he murmured against my hair.

It was only then that I remembered. I wasn't simply a girl who had very nearly gotten in a tragic mess. I was a teacher, with strict responsibilities and duties; and I had failed miserably.

"Oh, Bill," I wailed, sitting up and brushing away my tears. "His mother! What am I going to tell her? She'll never forgive me—never. She'll make me lose my job. She'll see that I can't get another. You don't know what she's like."

Bill looked rather grim. "I have a pretty fair idea. And speaking as man to man, I'd say this was the luckiest break of your young Ted's life. That kid's got good stuff in him. Three years in the Navy will make a man of him. He doesn't need any more pampering and spoiling. He needs discipline and a couple of good knocks. You're probably the first thing in this world he ever wanted that he didn't get. The Navy will show him that it's a pretty big place after all."

I knew he was right—so right it was silly to argue. To get even with me, Ted had probably saved his own future. But what about mine! Mrs. Carthage would swear that I should be sent to jail. Mr. Pitkin would jump at the chance to fire me. And not even my father's old friend would dare to go against the criticism of the whole town. I shuddered.

Bill pulled me close. "If you're worrying about your job, forget it, because as soon as school is over, we're going to be married. We would have been married years ago, if I hadn't been such a fool and coward. I've loved you a long time, Sherry, only I was afraid to tell you. You were always so lovely and popular and free, and you knew so many men. I didn't want to be that—just a new man, a fresh thrill. I wanted to have you for always, or not at all."

For always! I lifted my head, my heart in my eyes. Bill pressed a tender kiss against each of them. "That's why I said what I did last night. I *had* to know how you felt about me, dearest. Because if you had said yes—if I had been just a gay adventure—I don't think I could—"

I stopped his words with a kiss. I've stopped a lot of arguments that way in the few years that Bill and I have been married.

This morning I got a letter that made me feel that perhaps a bit of my "bad," was for the good. It was from Mary Jordan, telling me that she and Ted were going to be married as soon as he got out of the service. She didn't say so, but she knew—and so do I—that she owes that happiness to me. For if Ted hadn't enlisted in the Navy—if those years in the immense loneliness of the open sea hadn't taught him real values—he would never have had the courage to marry a girl his mother thought wasn't good enough for him—a girl who in every way was fine and sweet and worthy. Picturing the pride and happiness that must be in old Mr. Jordan's eyes, I hummed happily to myself and went out to prepare a special supper for Bill—by way of celebration.

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Posed by Sonja Henie

Kisses for Revenge

[*Continued from page 23*]

"You don't believe that, I know. And I don't know why I'm trying to make you. But when you said that to me back there a second ago, I knew I had to convince you. Before you leave this town I'm going to make you believe it!" His head came still closer to mine, and before I knew what was in his mind he had kissed me hard—yes, I believed, almost contemptuously. But before I could think of a cutting remark, Betty had found us. Her footsteps were so quiet that neither of us had heard her come.

I knew she had seen, but she gave no sign. John might have been a thousand miles away for all the notice she paid to his white face. Yes, he even looked ashamed, but Betty only said it was time to go home.

NEITHER Betty nor I talked on our way home. It wasn't until we were in our room that she said thinly. "I heard what John said to you tonight, Mimi. I was listening. And I saw what he did. But don't think you've got him. It takes more than a kiss to land a man like that—or hurt him. And—remember—he talked a jury into giving Joey five years for manslaughter. The first thing you know, he'll be talking you into thinking he deserved it—"

"He's going to have the swellest chance a man ever had to—try," I said. And, undressing, got into bed and shut my eyes. Betty cried herself to sleep, but it was a long time before I slept. And when I did, it was John Fletcher's face I carried into my dreams, not Joey's. And it was John's kiss, heavy on my lips, and hot, that stayed there, burning.

The next morning, I went down to see Joey. Betty let me go alone. She saw I wanted to, and she had been there two days before.

Have you ever been inside a penitentiary? Unless you have to go, don't. They aren't pretty places to see.

Visiting hours didn't start until one-fifteen. I was early, but the waiting room was already crowded.

A shabby woman, with a shawl-covered head, moved over, and motioned me to the bench beside her. I didn't realize I was crying until I saw the pity in her tired, old eyes.

"Your first visit, ain't it, dearie? That's always the hardest one. Me—"and there was something almost like pride in her simple words, "I've been coming this same time, this same day, every week for four years. It's my boy—my Mickey. I suppose it's your—man. You're so young, and so pretty—"

"It's my—my brother," I choked, grateful to talk to anyone, I'd been bottled up inside for so long. "He—he killed a man with his car, and they—they gave him five years for manslaughter—" and suddenly I was seeing myself, coming here as she had done, week after week, month after month, waiting in this awful room, with the prison stench growing on me—waiting for Joey—

She must have felt the terror in me, for leaning over, she laid a wrinkled, gnarled old hand on mine.

"Poor lad—poor, poor lad—! Drink, I suppose? That's what put my Mickey here. Drink and bad company. But we can be glad we ain't in her shoes," and she nodded toward a young girl no older than I, who was hunched on a bench not ten feet away. "Her man's one of the Latori gang. He's—he's burning, tomorrow!"

I TRIED to keep my shocked eyes lowered, but I couldn't. A girl? That poor haggared thing! Why, she was a thousand years old; misery had wiped her face so clean of youth.

It was the shadow of that misery I carried in to Joey, and seeing him didn't help any. Kissing him behind a wire screen, clinging to his hands with the bars biting me. Seeing him, all his jauntiness gone, crushed, beaten, with the prison mark on his shirt, a brand burning through and into his soul.

Oh, I didn't cry. I had sense enough for that. But I couldn't keep the tears from my words. Each one was a sob torn straight from my heart.

"Darling! Doing this to you! You, who wouldn't hurt a kitten! Oh, Joey, dear, dear, what's behind it all? Tell me—You didn't kill a man and run away. You've never run away from anything. It isn't in you. You couldn't—not for—eight miles—

"If it's what you said about that Fletcher man—that he had it in for you. If he sent you here to get even at you for his wife, I'll pay him back if it's the last thing I ever do! I'll—"

"Fletcher sent me here because my car killed a man." There was a dull, dead finality about Joey's voice that quieted me as nothing else could have done. "And as for Midge Fletcher, I might as well tell you the truth, Mimi. If I don't, Betty will.

"I was playing around with her all right. I was more than playing around with her, I was crazy about her. I can't explain it to you, Mimi. I don't love her. I loved Betty. I'll always love Betty. But—Midge Fletcher had been making a play for me ever since I struck Graywood. She had what it takes to get a young fool like me.

"Betty knew it. We had it out that night at the club. Betty told me she was through and gave me back my ring. I knew who I wanted then all right—and it wasn't Midge. But I was sore. Like a fool I drank a lot. Midge was there and helped me drink—

"No use stringing it out, Mimi. We were on the balcony, Midge and I, and doing a good job of love making when Fletcher found us."

"And, then—" I urged him on.

"I wish he'd killed me. He didn't. He's a big guy, and he lifted me up and threw me over the balcony, as though I'd been a piece of mud. And he told me to get out or he'd break my neck and hers, too. And I got out—took the car and—Well, I landed here.

"Mimi, I didn't see that man till the car was on him! I swear I didn't. And I did stop. I did! I was turning round to go back when that farmer caught me. Five miles in a car like mine—ten—it took me that long to realize what had happened.

"Wagner could have got me off with a fine and a workhouse sentence, if it had been anyone but Fletcher prosecuting. But you should have heard him. It made me creep! He asked for twenty years. Wagner got me five. But I'd have served the twenty and been glad, if it would bring that man back to life.

"Oh, Fletcher had it in for me all right. I don't blame him much, and it won't do you any good to get hot about it, either. Stay in Graywood, if you want to. Heaven knows I'd like you near me, and Betty needs you, but lay off Fletcher."

"Of course I'll stay by," I half-sobbed.

"Well," he went on, "that guy won't even recommend me for pardon, he told Wagner so. Stand by, that's all you can do, Mimi, and if—" His voice broke. He scrubbed at his eyes with shamed boy hands. "Don't be sorry for me," he blurted. "Don't! I can't stand it. Be sorry for Betty; she's the one, blaming herself for the scrap we had that night, blaming herself because I got tight and acted the fool—

"She's been so swell, Mimi! She's been such a good sport! If ever I get out of this—if ever I get a chance to make it up to her—Oh, Sis, I love her so! I love her so—"

"Time's up," the guard said. I didn't see the doors when I stumbled through them. I didn't see anything for a long time but Joey, behind those bars, his boy face twisted with the first man tears I'd ever seen him shed.

I knew then why I hadn't dared let myself think of Joey, why I hardly dared let myself think of him now—it was because of my hate for John Fletcher. A hate that had been planted in my heart with Joey's first scrawled letter, and had been growing in it ever since, to burn at last into a living flame.

Oh, I wasn't blind to Joey's guilt. But I was seeing it, dimmed by those penitentiary walls—dwarfed in my bitterness against the man who had sent him there—a man who had used his office to even a personal grudge—who had taken out his spite against an unfaithful wife, on a foolish, headstrong boy. And all my weeks of grief and worry, all my fierce loyalty to this twin brother whom I so greatly loved, gathered themselves to center on John Fletcher in a hate so sudden, so personal, so cold and still, it stunned me.

I'd told Betty I would hurt him as he had hurt Joey, and I would. Nothing could stop me now—nothing. I wouldn't let it. I knew I'd find a way. A hate like mine couldn't help but find a way.

IT WAS late when I got in that night, and Betty was asleep. I crawled in quietly, so as not to waken her. She lay so white and thin against her pillow, her eyes so heavy with the tears they had shed, my heart ached for her as much as it did for Joey. As much, as, in a strange, frightening way, it was aching for—myself.

It couldn't have been later than ten the next morning when John called me.

Betty was still sleeping, and I was eating my breakfast alone in the big, dreary dining room.

"I'm driving out into the country," he

said. "If I stop for you, will you go with me? I tried to get you yesterday and couldn't. It's about what happened at the country club night before last. I want to apologize. I want to tell you how sorry I am. I—"

"Oh, you can skip that." I said. And then—"All right. I'll go."

"You've got your wedges in, Mimi Deming!" I told myself fiercely, "No girl ever had a better one. See you make the most of it!"

If I was beginning to suspect, even then, that the thing I had set myself to do was to cost more dearly than I had dreamed, I was to know it before that morning's trip was done.

John's face was lined and haggard. His good-morning a sober, tired one.

"The great John Fletcher, caught—kissing a girl!" I laughed, my eyes mocking. "You are taking it hard, aren't you? What's the matter? Afraid Betty will tell?"

He didn't even try to answer me, and my words fell flat against his grave, unsmiling eyes.

We left the town behind us. We left the main, traveled road for a narrow country land that wound between sun-splashed hedges.

I found myself thinking dreamily: "A road from nowhere to—nowhere," and hadn't known I'd thought it aloud, until John took it up, bitterness pushing hard behind his words.

"For you—yes. And for me—until now. Afraid because I kissed you? Afraid because Betty might tell? Yes—I was afraid, for your sake—not for mine. Oh, I'm not in love with you—don't flatter yourself. And I don't want to be. Roads that ended in love I put behind me years ago. I intend to keep them there. That's why I brought you here today. To have this thing out with myself—with you. For once my feet have found a road, they—generally keep it."

And suddenly, he pointed ahead and smiled. For there, where the rutted, traveled path had been, was a fence and a weed grown field. Nodding toward it, he said, his lips twisting, "The end of the road, and it still leads nowhere. Look at me. I'd like to see your eyes."

My lids were heavy, leaded by a strange new fear that held them down. Fear of myself. The first time I'd ever known that for any man. And John Fletcher wasn't a stranger. Hadn't I known him since childhood; carried his image in my heart; treasured it. I was afraid to show him my eyes for fear of what he would see in them. But I had to. He was making me—

Slowly, unwillingly, in answer to that grave, low insisting, I lifted them. Slowly, slowly, while the sun, shining through the latticed branches of a tree above us, sent its shadows across his bent face—odd, criss-crossed shadows that I saw first, dimly through the spell that held me. Then, with a sudden, sick clearness, a clearness that changed them not to shadows now, but—bars—iron bars through which Joey's face looked out at me. Joey's frightened, boy's face, with the prison pallor on it, and terror high behind its eyes. Reason was back on me once more, bringing with it all its fostered bitterness.

This chance Fate had given me—had thrust into my hands—was I going to be weak enough to turn aside from it now?

I gave John my eyes, then. I wasn't afraid any more. I didn't have to be.

"The end of this road, perhaps," I mocked. "But there are other roads aren't there, John? And—who knows what we'll

MATILDA: There! That's why the bride's having plenty of grief, Susan—look what's in her box of groceries!

SUSAN: Never mind, Matilda, pick up your skirts and run! I don't think that dog likes old ladies.

MATILDA: But, Susan, you know it's that weak-kneed soap the bride buys that leaves dirt sticking in her clothes. She'll never get rid of tattle-tale gray—if we don't show her the right kind of soap to use.

SUSAN: But the dog! . . .

MATILDA: Don't be a 'fraidy-cat—I'll take care of the dog. You take that lazy soap out of the bride's groceries and put in our bar of Fels-Naptha Soap.

SUSAN: Nice doggie! We're only trying to be helpful. We're only trying to show the bride how to get whiter washes.

MATILDA: Yes, doggie. Fels-Naptha's richer *golden* soap and *lots of naptha* get clothes so clean, tattle-tale gray simply has to scamper.

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find on them? But now I think you'd better take me home. Betty will miss me—and wonder."

He looked at me for a long minute, then with a sigh, swung his car around, but not before he had kissed me again. A kiss that was fierce, hard.

"No, this road isn't ended—" he said bitterly. "As for the others—at least, they'll bear exploring."

That bitterness lasted through the days that followed—grew with them. Days that never passed without my seeing John somewhere—somehow.

Graywood was a small town, and a gay one. I was a new girl in it and a fairly attractive one. Dances, parties, bridge at the club, at the different homes. Always there was John. And Midge.

Midge was sharp and stiff and cold. I was Betty's friend. Her distrust of Betty sharpened her distrust for me into open dislike. As for John—it was war between us. We both knew that. A strange, unhappy war, with mockery our weapons, and hearts our spoil. His or mine. We were both so busy trying to hurt each other that neither of us seemed much to care.

It took my next trip down to see Joey to clear *my* way.

It was barely two weeks since I had seen him last, but to my first shocked glance, it seemed as though he had lost twenty pounds. His eyes were sunken, fever bright hollows, and his skin, yellow parchment drawn over angular bones.

I left him and Betty together and went straight to the warden.

"He's dying!" I wailed. "Isn't there something we can do? There must be. You can't hold a man here and let him die! You can't!"

THE warden was kind. He tried to be patient with me; but sorrow and grief were a part of his day's work, and mine was such a small one compared to the others he knew and had known.

"I'm afraid there's nothing," he said soberly. "Your brother was tried and convicted. He killed a man. He is paying the price. Five years against eternity? Not such a big price. Even you will have to grant that. And, with good conduct, there's always the chance for a pardon. When that time comes, get your attorney to file the necessary papers and we will see what we can do. But until then—"

"By that time he'll be dead," I said bitterly, and left the room.

Betty was like a wild thing that night, walking the floor, crying, beating her small fists against her pillow, taking her worry and grief out on me.

"It's all right for you—you're only Joey's sister. While he rots in prison, you can dance and flirt and have a good time with the man who put him there."

She hesitated a moment, then blurted out, "Going to get even, were you? Going to ruin John Fletcher? You're falling for him; that's what you're doing? It's in your eyes every time he comes near you. It is too! It is! It is! You don't care what he's done to Joey! You don't care about anything but him— Plans? You never had any plans. You'll never have any—"

Oh, I needed them, all right—those angry, cruel words of hers. Needed them worse than even Betty knew. And I'd needed that finished, death look, on Joey's poor face. They did their work. I think what I said to her then must have been lying deep down in my heart ever since I had heard John Fletcher's name.

"I've a plan, all right," I said quietly. "And if you'll stop abusing me long enough, I'll tell you. Didn't you ever read the tabloids, Betty? What's the thing that gets men like John Fletcher into them? What can smear their names over every yellow sheet in the land? What can kill them quicker than any bullet, and make them the laughing stock for half the world? It's a woman, isn't it? Sure.

"You say I love John Fletcher. I'm not even trying to deny it. Maybe I do. But the real thing is that he thinks he hates me. And when a man like John Fletcher thinks he hates a woman, it isn't very long before he's going to love her—if she wants to make him. And—that's what I'm going to do."

Her eyes widened as I went on, "Listen—how does this sound to you? 'Candidate for Congress Caught in Hotel Room with Woman!'—'Secret Love Life of John Fletcher Exposed!' You say Jess Wagner and his crowd would give their eye teeth to get something on John Fletcher. Well, I'll give them plenty. And I'll give it to them in time so there will be no 'Congressman' tacked to John Fletcher's name."

Betty's mouth fell open. I'd caught her hands while I talked, but she pulled away from me. "You're crazy!" she chattered. "You couldn't do anything like that, Mimi! I—can't let you. And it would kill Joey as much as prison is. And—you wouldn't dare! It wouldn't be only John the papers would ruin—it would be—"

"The Deming twins—" I laughed, "a convict and a love thief. Well, what of it? Joey is ruined, isn't he? Why should I be any better? It would be the first thing I haven't shared with him—even being born. And if you tell him—" My fingers dug into her thin shoulders again, shook at them. I'd started talking and I couldn't stop, talking against myself, against that something in me that just hearing John's name could stir. That something I had to weed out, tear out, so it would never live again.

"You love Joey, don't you? Well then, don't try to argue me out of this. After it's over, we'll be starting from scratch, Joey and I. And if you're afraid to start with us, now's your chance to say so. It's your right."

"I'd start in hell with Joey," she said slowly, "and stay there with him, if I had to. But you won't. John will get a divorce and you'll marry him, and—"

"Midge wouldn't give him a divorce," I told her shortly. "Her kind never do unless they've got something better in sight. And she hasn't now. And he probably can't get one, or he'd have had it before now. Don't worry, Betty, we'll all be sharing your hell—" and I turned over on my side. I doubt if either of us slept that night. I know I didn't.

Less than four weeks before election, and so many things to crowd into them—so many ugly, scheming, horrible things.

WHAT'S the use going over those days that followed, one by one, or trying to put down here all the things that happened between John Fletcher and me?

Glances—low, half hidden. Low sentences—softly spoken, carrying a meaning their words couldn't tell. The touch of my hand on his. Dancing, the yield of my body to his arms. Eyes that gave a lie always—impudent, mocking.

Oh, I won him at last. It had been easier than even I had thought—or hoped. Almost I could have pitied him, the tortured, angry flame of his submission.

"I'm mad about you. Crazy. The only road in all the world and it leads to you. What's the use pretending, trying to play a game? You've got me. My heart is yours. What are you going to do with it? Throw it back in my face—and laugh at me?"

And when I didn't answer he had taken me in his arms and kissed me until I thought I would never breathe again. Hoped I wouldn't. I knew then that whatever I had come to Graywood to do must be done soon or—not at all.

Betty's eyes were always on me those days, following me, staring at me, dark with somber judging. I knew what she was thinking, and sobbed against it. "I'm trying—I tell you. I'm trying, Betty! But he loves me. He wants to end the farce of his marriage and marry me. Did you ever hear of a girl who couldn't be ruined before?" I laughed with the tears streaking my face—laughed until she had to shake me to make me stop.

It was about that time I began to notice the change in Midge Fletcher—the change everyone seemed to have noticed but me—thin and pinched and shrunken, the defiance gone from her big blue eyes, the smile stiff and painted on her lips.

"She's taken other women's men," Betty said with that mirthless little laugh that tore me so, "but she's never had a dose of her own medicine before. And it doesn't taste so good. And then, perhaps—" she hesitated an instant, bit at her lips, shrugged, and went on— "perhaps she's been thinking of something I said to her the other day—something I heard from a maid who used to work for her. No, I'm not telling. I'm not telling anyone just yet. But I've got a little scheme of my own, and maybe, before we're done, we'll even up our score against the Fletchers, together, Mimi—you and I."

But it was my score with John that was to be settled first, and it was Midge herself who brought it about.

It was the evening of my talk with Betty. John and I were sitting at the bridge table at the club, waiting for our partners to take their places, and for a moment alone. He spoke without raising his eyes, nor stopping the monotonous shuffling of cards he held.

"I asked Midge to divorce me last night," he said dully, "and she laughed in my face. She told me there wasn't anything I could do that would make her. And that if I tried to divorce her, she would sue you for alienation of affections, and take every cent you had. And she would. Still, I wouldn't be free. And I love you.

"Do you know what I want to ask you—what I've been wanting to ask you all day—what I lay awake all night, thinking of, and desiring with every drop of blood in me?

"I'm leaving tonight for Chicago—a legal trip that will keep me over the weekend. I want to ask you to meet me there. I want to ask you to give me one night of our lives—one night to remember and hold with me through all the empty nights to come. I want you so badly, that I'd ask you that! You—the woman I love."

My heart was thumping like a mad thing. My throat was tight and small, breathing hurt me. My chance—the thing I had been working for—planning for, put into my hands!

I tried to shut my eyes to John's haggard, miserable face—shut my heart to this man who had condemned my brother

Forced myself to put Joey first. Joey, as I had seen him last, gaunt, sick, fever-burned. But, in spite of it all, it was love for this man before me, and a desire for him as great as his for me, that brought my answer trembling from my lips. Love and desire that rode high above the shamed, mad stubbornness to go through with this thing I had planned, no matter what it cost; and that gave bitter truth to my words.

"You aren't the only one suffering, John. And you needn't be, unless you want to be. I'll go. Tell me when and tell me where, and I'll meet you. There's no one to care what I do with my life. My life is my own. And the one night out of it that you want is yours. It's not so much to give—"

THE cards scattered to the floor. His hands flew out to rest, hot and hard, on mine. "Don't say that," he groaned, "unless you mean it, dear. I—couldn't stand it." And when I didn't answer. "Tomorrow morning I'll wire you the hotel—the room. You can get the twelve-fifteen out and be with me at half past eight. And whether you come to me or whether you don't, I'll love you till the day I die—and after—" There were tears in his eyes, and seeing them misted there, I felt suddenly sick and very, very old.

"I'll be there," I said thickly, and pushed back my chair. They played their bridge that night without me. I went home.

I doubt if I could have gone through with it, even then, if it hadn't been for Betty and her news from Joey.

She had left for the penitentiary right after lunch and had shown me so plainly she wanted to go alone, that I had let her. But when I reached home, she was there, tired and hopeless, her small face blotched with tears.

"He's in the hospital," she cried. "I couldn't even see him! Oh, Mimi, it's awful! The warden says it's prison fear—that it gets men sometimes, and—and kills them! I called Jess Wagner at the Capitol, and got him. He's leaving for Graywood tonight, and he said for you to come to see him tomorrow. He—he says he got in touch with John last week, and asked him if he would go with him to the governor to see if they couldn't push a pardon through, for Joey, and—and John said he wouldn't! He said—Wagner told me so—that Joey was no better than other boys, and he'd have to take his medicine! That he wouldn't make a move until he had served his regular time.

"What will we do, Mimi? What *will* we do?"

I was as cold as I had been that first night when I had met John. "I know what I'm going to do," I said, and told her.

"You mean," she whispered, her eyes wide, "that you're meeting John Fletcher in Chicago—that you're spending tomorrow night—with him?—that you're really going through with this awful thing? Oh, what's the use, Mimi? It won't help Joey any, and it'll make everything so much worse! For Joey—and everyone—"

"It may not help Joey any, but it will help me," I said. "And Joey needn't know it. He doesn't see many papers where he is." And I slept that night. John could be hard. Well, so could I. And—just as cruel.

His message came to me at nine the next morning. "Room 408, The Shrevor Hotel, eight-thirty tonight."

Betty hadn't come down. I put it in my purse, and went to see Jess Wagner.

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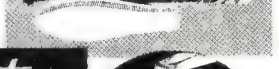

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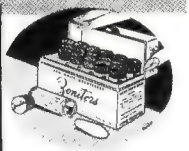

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Wagner came out to meet me, a small, heavy man, florid, growing bald. I knew by his, "Good morning, Miss Leason," that Betty had warned him of my name. It was a good thing, for I had forgotten. I was Mimi Deming for the first time since I had come to Graywood—just Mimi Deming, Joey Deming's twin sister, ready to even my score against the man who had hurt him.

In the small room where he led me, with the door closed behind us, I didn't lose any time.

"Betty tells me you tried to get the governor interested in Joey, Mr. Wagner, and that John Fletcher refused to help. Is that the truth?"

"I'm afraid it is," he said gravely. "I did my best at the trial, and I've done my best since. The accident was a bad one, and there was so much circumstantial evidence. The fact that Joey had turned around to go back, when he was caught, and his obvious sorrow over the whole thing, should have helped—might have with any other man than John Fletcher. You know, of course, that Fletcher's prosecution of Joey wasn't all—impersonal? That was rather a stumbling block, you see."

"Oh, I see," I said. And then, slowly, my eyes raising to his, and staying there, "John Fletcher is rather a stumbling block to you, too, I gather?" I didn't wait for his answer. I didn't dare wait for anything, then. I said what I had come to say.

"What would it mean to you, Mr. Wagner if you got some real scandal on John Fletcher—if I told you that at eight-thirty tonight, he will be registered in Room 408, The Shrevor Hotel, in Chicago, with a woman who isn't his wife? What would it mean to you, or some of your men, to find him there?

"No, don't ask me any questions. Just answer mine. What would it mean?"

He stared at me, puffing his political cigar, his eyes narrowed, the ruddy color faded a little from his plump cheeks. "It would mean," he said slowly, "that I would be the next congressman from this district. That's what it would mean. It would mean the evening up of a lot of old scores I've got against him and his Independent gang. But—

"No, my dear. Much as I would like to believe it, you can't rope me in on a gag like that. And—I never framed a man yet. I won't begin now. Not even with Fletcher."

"Is it framing a man to prove that he's making love to another woman besides his wife? Is it framing him to catch him with her when he has asked her to meet him—begged her to meet him?

"If he's such a righteous man, so anxious to see that justice is done, to other people, why shouldn't it be done to him, too? Why shouldn't he pay for his sins? Joey has to pay for his." I clenched my hands.

"I'm telling you John Fletcher will be in that room tonight, and with a woman. If you won't send someone to catch him, I'll find other people who will. The papers would eat it up—your own party papers that are trying to beat him. There are a dozen reporters who would give their souls for a scoop like that—"

His voice dropped, became a whisper. His eyes were bulging.

"This *is* straight. This *is* the goods. It's manna from heaven dropped in my lap. No, you needn't peddle it to the papers, he said wryly. "I'll handle that. But wait a minute, who's the woman? If you know all this, you know her. This is hot stuff. I've got to see where I'm stepping before I break it. John isn't falling for any commoner. It may be the governor's wife for all I know—!"

"It isn't," I said bitterly. "You needn't worry about being burned. It's just a fool girl, whom scandal can't hurt—and who wouldn't care much if it did. I've given you the hotel and the room, but you'd better make the time nine o'clock, and be sure. Are you going to be there—or aren't you? I've got to have a "yes" or a "no," and rising, I went to the door.

I HAD my hand on the knob when he caught my arm. "Listen," he spluttered, "you're not fool enough to do this thing yourself, are you? You're not going that far?"

I said, "What do you think, Mr. Wagner?" and laughed.

John had said to catch the twelve-fifteen. I hurried home, packed my bag. I hadn't much time to spare. Betty was out, but I couldn't wait. I didn't even leave her a note—just John's message, pinned to her dresser. That would tell her all she would have to know.

I bought a magazine on the train and read it all the way in to the city. I didn't know what it was then, and I don't now. But I read everything in it, even the advertisements, from front to back. All I knew was that I mustn't think—that I had left the past behind me, and the future was an ugly thing I couldn't face.

I didn't face it, either, until, the endless hours over at last, John's door was opening to my frightened knock. John's arms were drawing me close.

Even then, it wasn't I who was facing it, but a dead thing—giving still lips to John's hungry kisses.

He thought I was tired. He said, his voice broken with love, hushed by the tenderness that filled it, "Poor darling! Poor sweet!" and took my wraps, and my bag. Took me high in his arms and carried me, like a child, to a couch, found a pillow for my head, and kneeling beside me, put his face against my hands.

"This day has been so long," he whispered. "I thought it would never end! I was almost afraid to have it end, for fear you wouldn't come.

"The train was late—did you know that, darling? Fifteen minutes late! I've been walking the floor. Our night—the one night out of our lives, and fifteen minutes—wasted! How can I tell you how much I love you? How can I tell you what it means to have you here like this?"

His hair was not flaming now. It was dark in the soft lamplight. It was thick as a young boy's hair, as vital, strong. I touched it with my fingers, so very lightly, yet he felt it, and reaching up, caught my hand in his and laid it against his lips.

"I love you so!" he whispered. "I love you so—terribly. Put your arms around me. Hold my head against your heart—the heart of the woman who loves me—"

I saw the watch on his wrist. It's hands were at nine. Any minute now, any minute and Jess Wagner would be there with his men! I wanted to die. Every thought in me, every beat of my heart, every pulse of my rushing blood, was a prayer to die.

Footsteps in the corridor—knock on the door. John stumbled to his feet. I thought numbly, now—now—now—and covered my face with my shaking hands—

In the seconds that it took him to reach the door—open it, I lived a million years. And each year an agony.

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It was the bell boy with a service menu from the dining room! I'll never have to be told how a condemned man feels at a last minute reprieve. I knew then.

And I knew something else, too. I knew I never could face the agony of those waiting minutes again! I knew what my heart had been warning me from the first, that I loved this man too much to go through with this thing I had set myself to do.

I stumbled to my feet. John's low voice, giving his order, came dimly to me —an unreal voice from an unreal world. I found my hat, my coat—reached blindly for my bag.

"If I can get away," I thought, "before Wagner and his men come. If only I can get away—" But I was too late.

John had closed the door and was coming toward me, his eyes wide with shocked surprise, when those other footsteps sounded in the hall outside—not one person's footsteps this time—more, coming toward our door—stopping there. And I knew the time had come at last.

I doubt if John even had heard them. I know he hadn't time to speak before my hand was on his arm, jerking him, pulling him toward the inner room, and I was sobbing at him, in a wild rush of crazed confessing.

"Get me out of here. Hide me. It's Jess Wagner and his men. They're out there in the hall! I told them to come. I wanted them to find me here with you. And now I can't go through with it. My name isn't Leason, John—it's Deming. I'm Joey Deming's sister. I wanted to ruin you, John. I meant to, but I can't. Because I love you!

"There's a fire escape somewhere, John. There must be! Let me out, so I can get away. Don't hold me. Listen, they're knocking now. They'll break the door down if you don't let them in! Let me go, I tell you! Don't stand there looking at me like that! Can't you see I'm telling you the truth? It's Wagner's men outside; and if they find me here with you, they'll ruin you—"

His hands were on my shoulders, hard, heavy, fierce hands. They were gripping me, digging into my flesh until I wanted to scream with pain. His eyes were holding mine, not gentle any more nor loving, but hard as steel.

"Joey Deming's sister," he breathed. "You—! Letting me think you loved me, lying to me, leading me on, taking my love and using it against me, peddling it to Wagner and his gang, to use! You—!"

The knocking at the door was growing louder now, more insistent. But if John heard it, he gave no sign, only an added coldness to his eyes, an added harshness to his voice, an added strength to those gripping hands, whose marks I was to carry for days to come.

"Revenge?" he said. "And hate? So that's what was behind those eyes of yours? And I thought it was love! What a fool I've been—what a blind, conceited fool!

"Hating me so much, you could do this to me—and to yourself! Hating me so, you were willing to throw yourself to the wolves, along with me, to get even!

"That first night I met you, I told you the truth. I'm telling it to you again, Muriel Deming, sister of Joey Deming whom I sent to the penitentiary, I did the thing there was for me to do, no more—no less. I sent him there because he had been a drunken driver whose car had killed a man. I would have done the same

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had he been my own son. The son I'll never have—

"Now, if you are ready, we'll let the gentlemen in. Delilah turning her shorn Samson over to his enemies. A swell part, I hope you enjoy it—"

I WAS at the door before he reached it, pushed against it, my hands outspread, crying, each word a gasp from my frightened heart. "No! No, John! No—"

He flung me aside as though I had been a rag; sent me reeling against a chair; threw the door wide.

"Gentlemen," he mocked, "Come in." And then, his voice rising. "Darn it! Didn't you hear me? Come in!"

Crouching where he had flung me, my knees water beneath me, my eyes bleak with fear, I stared. Something was wrong. These were not the men I had expected to s e e—detectives, reporters, gossip-avid, hard-eyed strangers, hard men with an ugly job to do, and ready to do it. These were—

I brushed my eyes with trembling hands, tried to rub them clear. I hadn't any stomach. It was down where my shoes should be. I hadn't any breath.

Jess Wagner was there. Yes, an apologetic, purple-faced Jess Wagner, his hat off, his bald head damp with perspiration, his eyes shifting, shamed. But, crowding in front of him, running toward me, pushing John aside as easily as he had pushed me, was Betty!

Before I could think, or move, she had me in her arms, and was crying at me, her words choked by the laughter and tears that filled them.

"Darling! I tried to get you, but it was too late! Joey is free! Free, do you hear? Free! Dad's home and he's down to the penitentiary now. He's bringing him back to Graywood. He wasn't driving his car that night at all! It was Midge! She met him outside the club that night and made him take her away. She told him that John would kill her if he didn't! She told him that he'd got her into the mess and he'd have to get her out—that he'd have to marry her. And—and when he wouldn't drive, she took the wheel, herself. She—" Then, suddenly conscious of John there behind her, she swung to Jess Wagner—

"Tell him," she sobbed. "Tell him—"

And it was Wagner who told us. Low words, that, Betty's sobbing, silenced at last, carried to me, hoarsed by an embarrassed pitying.

"Might as well have it from the shoulder, Fletcher. I'd rather be hanged than tell you this. But your wife came through. I have her signed confession. It was Betty who did it. She had been sure all along that Midge had been mixed up in it someway, but Joey wouldn't tell, and, when a week or so ago a maid who had been working in your house told her that your wife had come home the night of Joey's trouble with mud on her shoes, and her dress torn, she was—sure. When she found that Miss Deming, here, really had done this fool thing she had set out to do, she came right to me, and we went to see Mrs. Fletcher together.

"I—well, I told her what wasn't true. I told her Joey had told us the whole story. It—it did the trick. She was driving his car that night—just as Betty said. She saw the man too late to stop, and when Joey tried to, she wouldn't let him. She was pretty scared. By the time he could get the wheel away from her, they'd gone quite a way—far enough so she could get out, and go home.

"There isn't much else to say. Joey took the rap as any decent fellow would. He figured, I suppose, that after all it was his mess—and his car—"

"And—your skirts are clean, Fletcher. I'd like you to know that. She swore you didn't know the truth. And as for this—" his eyes swept the room, "I don't have to tell you, I guess, that they're clean here, too. I want that election next week, and I mean to have it, but I'll get it with a clean fight. There'll be no mud slinging. Heaven knows, Fletcher, I'm sorry for you—from the very bottom of my heart."

John met his gaze. I've never seen a face so gray, so utterly drained of blood.

"To hell with your pity," he said slowly, "and to hell with the election. I don't want it. I'm out of the race—for good. I'm through with that and"—he looked at me—"want to call it quits—everything. If you'd get out, all of you, I'd like to pay my bill and pack. It looks," his lips twisted, "as though there might be matters needing me at—home."

We flew back to Graywood, Betty and Wagner and I, together.

They told me more about Joey, but I hardly listened. John hated me. He would always hate me. Beyond that wall, nothing could reach.

Betty knew what was the matter with me and her arms went around me, and stayed around me u n t i l, Graywood reached at last, they got me into a car and took me to the house.

I was in bed three days—not bodily sick, just soul sick. I didn't want to get up—ever. When Betty told me some jumbled story about Midge Fletcher killing herself, after she'd heard she was to be arrested for the crime Joey had been punished for, it made me a lot worse. I hated myself with a mighty hatred for the way I'd messed up all those lives. With the weight of my guilt and sin oppressing me, I almost went mad.

Joey came—crept softly to my bedside and put his head against my hands, put his arm around me. Still I stayed there. I wanted to die. Prayed to die, and—couldn't.

On the morning of the fifth day—the day Joey and Betty were to be married and leave for a year abroad, I got up and dressed. I went to John's office. I knew that the day before Midge had been buried. I felt I had to say something to him. I wouldn't tell anyone where I was going, nor let anyone go with me. Just walked out of the house and went—alone.

IT WAS early—the place was empty, except for John. Through the open door of his inner room I could see him at his desk, shuffling through a stack of mail. His face was gray and tired.

He thought I was the office girl. "I have some dictation, Miss Teller," he said. "If you'll bring your book—" Then, glancing up, he saw me.

I didn't give him a chance to speak. I wanted to say what I had come to say and go while I had the strength.

"I've come to say good-by, John," I told him, my voice coming to me strange and thin and far away. "Joey and Betty are being married today and leaving for a trip abroad. I'm going as far as New York with them. I'll never see you again, and I know you will be glad. But I couldn't go without seeing you once more and telling you how sorry I am about poor Midge. Maybe it isn't seemly for me to say it now, but you must believe that

what I told you in that hotel room in Chicago is true. I love you. I've always loved you and always will.

"That's all, John, except that I know you hate me, and I don't blame you. And no matter how much you hate me, it couldn't be half as much as I hate myself."

That was the way I left him, without once turning back to look behind me—I couldn't bear to.

I DON'T remember much about anything that happened after that— A confusion of things to be done, of packing to finish, of faces—Mr. Lambert's face, kindly, grave. Betty's, love-filled, pitying. Joey's the prison pallor still on it, but a new joy wiping it free of the fear that had shadowed it for so long.

The short ceremony was over, and I was in my room, putting the last touches to my hurried packing, when Joey came to me. "You are wanted down in the library," he mumbled. "You—you forgot to sign the marriage certificate—" and as I passed him, he pulled me close and kissed my lips, and I saw he was smiling at me.

At least he was happy. That much my mad folly had helped to bring about. I'd have that memory to help me through the years that were to come.

It was late afternoon. The great, dark house emptied at last, seemed strangely silent, strangely dim. But in the huge, walnut paneled library, the western sun still had its way. A broad, golden beam, shining through the long French windows, fell like a shining finger, not on the minister with his certificate for me to sign, but—on the last person in all the world I had expected to find waiting for me there—John.

And that was the way he came to me, wordless, along that shining, sun-splashed path, his hair burning red in the glowing light, the candles behind his dark eyes flaming, his arms outstretched toward me.

And that was the way I went to meet him, wordless, too, save for his name, "John, John," sobbing against my parted lips.

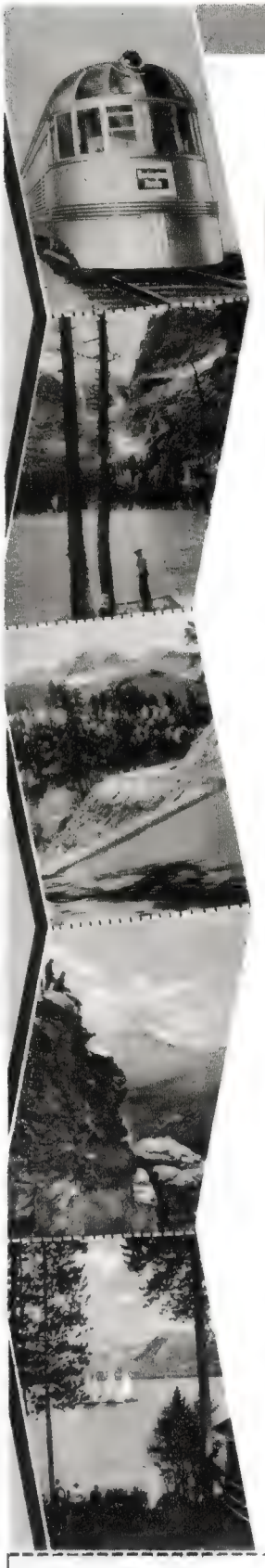
And when we did speak at last, there was so little to say, yet that little, saying so much! Just his voice, soft against my hair, whispering, "Go if you have to, dear, but not too far. As soon as I can, I'll come to you—you know that. You know I'll never give you up. You know I—love you—"

And mine answering, "Yes, I know, John. I know."

I doubt if either of us heard Betty and Joey tiptoeing softly into the room, only to tiptoe as softly out again, and close the door behind them. We weren't hearing much of anything, either of us then—nor seeing much of anything but—each other.

Love and peace—the arms of the man I love around me. Arms, that no matter how long we had to wait for each other, nor how many miles must separate us before we could meet again, would always be around me, holding me tightly and closely, loving me, caring for me—forgiving me—

From somewhere far away, a church bell tolled. Through the open window, swept in to us on the evening breeze, came a woman's voice, singing a child to sleep—a soft voice, cradled with love, cradled with joy. And then, there was nothing more, but John's lips on mine, and a promise of happiness.



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THE TRUTH ABOUT CORNS

by Robert M. Smith

FEW PEOPLE understand what corns are, or how to get rid of them. A corn is not live tissue. It is an accumulation of dead cells which become the focal point of renewed development. It gets bigger and uglier. As it gets larger, it goes deeper—the point of this plug-like accumulation pressing like a pinpoint into your flesh and against tiny nerves. That's what causes you intense pain.

Paring corns is not the answer. Corns get bigger and more painful. To get rid of corns forever, the "root" or dead cell plug must be removed. That gets rid of *that* corn. To prevent a new corn developing, shoe pressure or whatever caused it must be eliminated.

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Posed by Sonja Henie

Outcast

[*Continued from page* 30]

the gingerale, the chicken, and the glasses and plates, and was just slicing the bread, when it happened. Tearing into the silence, shattering my ear-drums it came—the shot from up front. My knife went clattering to the floor. I yelled "*Gwen!*" and ran into the other room.

There I found her. She lay on my rug, like a doll a child has thrown down, limp and relaxed—oh, so small and slim and so *young*. And lying near her little hand was my pistol. Blood was pouring from a frightful hole in her head, staining the brown curls—oh, Gwen, Gwen—!

There are times in one's life on which one looks back afterward and wonders, "How did I endure that? How did I go through it?"

Such a time was the rest of that hideous night. It was so hideous, indeed, that it takes on a queer, nightmare, blurred sort of quality, now as I remember it; the frantic telephoning for the doctor and the arrival of the police, the heartbreaking job of seeing Iva and Earl hear the news, the endless, endless questions. All of it has the fantastically horrible cast of unreality of an especially bad dream.

I SUPPOSE I might have been very seriously involved in the eyes of the police had it not been for several unmistakable factors. One was the nature of the wound, and Gwen's fingerprints—her slender, childish, fingerprints—in just the correct position on the gun's handle. There were others, too, but the most clinching was the note she had left, stuck in the pigeonhole of my desk. She had written it while I talked to Lola, after she'd hunted up the gun.

Roy, forgive me, please, but I've been racking my brains how I'd do it and now this is a way. Tell Mother and Dad to forgive me, too. Tell them I love them. I'm sorry. But I can't take it. I just can't take it.

Gwen.

A frantic little scrawl that broke our hearts—

Later the next day we knew what it was that she couldn't take. Later we knew that little Gwen, whom we had thought of as only a child herself, was going to have a child, and had known it for weeks. We had no idea, those of us who had loved her, who the boy might be.

All through that awful day, which I spent with Earl and Iva and the fine old grandparents (four people whose hearts you broke when you pulled that trigger, Gwen—four people who will walk softly to their graves) there was no room in my mind and heart for anything but aching grief and pity. Lola telephoned; I barely knew what she said. There was no chance to see her. I was busy trying to ease the shock for Gwen's crushed people.

That night Mrs. Court called. "Roy? I'm calling for Lola. She had hoped to see you tonight, but I have just put her to bed with a sleeping capsule. She is utterly heartbroken and has cried all day. Oh, Roy, how could you?"

I echoed stupidly. "How could I? How could I what?"

"Take that girl in your room late at night when you were engaged to Lola! You lied to Lola too. She must have been there when you were talking to my child, and you said you were alone! How do you think she felt? What kind of a shock do you think it was to her, to all of us?"

I was stupid with shock and exhaustion. I hadn't slept for thirty-six hours. I was sick with horror. Gwen's face, as she raised it for my good-by kiss, haunted and tortured me. I wondered and wondered whether I mightn't possibly have prevented the tragedy with a little more understanding. And I'd spent this day, besides, watching four people in mortal, almost intolerable agony.

So I said, "I'm sorry. I can't talk about it," and hung up the 'phone. Maybe that was a mistake, too.

We'd kept Gwen's condition out of the newspapers. It never was printed. But of course I realize now that by the next morning—the day of her funeral—the news had run like wildfire all over the town.

The services at the church were over; we were standing underneath the undertaker's tent before the flower-filled grave, listening to the sonorous, solemn words of the preacher. How did one get through this? Wouldn't it ever be over?

A hand slipped through my arm, closed tightly over my clenched hand. And turning, with eyes blind with tears, I met the grave, pitying regard of Vee's dark eyes.

It was raining a little when we turned away. This Autumn landscape was dreary. The group waited while Earl half-carried his almost fainting wife away, his own face a mask of white pain, waited till the family car had moved out. Then Vee said in a low voice, "May I ride back with you?" and I nodded, grateful to have her.

We were making our way slowly to the car when a voice behind me said in a sibilant whisper, "It's a shame! I wonder he has the face to come! I should think he'd be afraid her father would kill him!"

"Sh-h-h!" A man's embarrassed voice.

"I don't care, he was the man—of course he was! Else why would she have been alone in his apartment? And why would she go there to shoot herself, anyway?"

Vee turned around. She said in a fierce little whisper, "Oh, for *shame!*" And there was an abrupt silence from behind us—

Carefully, in silence, I helped Vee into the car, and a moment later we rolled out the great gates.

Her great dark eyes were blazing, her face was white. She said under her breath, "Oh, I'd like to *kill* them—how horrible, how cruel! After all you've been through!"

I knew a second's wonder at this heart-warming loyalty. After all, I hadn't treated Vee very well. I answered, "Thanks, Vee. It's sweet of you, but it doesn't matter. I don't care, really. Iva and Earl don't believe that."

"Nor anybody else with any sense," she said fiercely. And I saw that her eyelashes were wet, the misty drops hanging on their fringed curling ends.

After supper that night I saw Earl, Iva, and the grandparents off on the train. The grandfather, fine old Mr. Rexford, had said to me the day before, "Help me persuade them all to get away right after

—after everything is over. I'll foot all the bills. I want us to go abroad for awhile. Earl and Iva will go crazy if they try to stay on here." And Earl and Iva, dazed with grief and shock, had been easy to persuade.

IT WAS just eight-thirty when I rang Lola's door bell that night; and it was her *mother* who answered, stern and pale.

She said, "Oh, it's you, Roy! Lola has been looking for you. If I'd had *my* way you wouldn't have been allowed to step your foot in this house, but—"

"*Mother!*" said a choked voice behind her.

"Lola—oh, Lola!" I cried in wild relief, and rushed to meet her. But Lola's mother barred my way, her face flaming.

"Don't you touch her! How dare you? Why, you're no better than a murderer! Everybody knows what you did to poor little Gwen—and she, half your age. You—a trusted friend of the family! Lola you promised me—"

The woman at the cemetery hadn't mattered. But this time the stab drew blood. Still it was Lola who counted, wasn't it? Not her mother—just Lola. I put my arm out. Hardly knowing that I did so, I pushed Mrs. Court from my path fiercely, and caught Lola by the shoulders, barely hearing her mother's protesting shriek.

"Lola, you don't believe that? You don't! Say you don't!"

Her head fell. Her corn-flower eyes would not meet my own. She was very pale and verv lovely and she looked quite wretched as she sobbed, "You lied to me! You told me she wasn't there, and she was! If your conscience was clear, what made you lie?"

Oh, was that silly little lie to condemn me now? I said desperately, "It was only because of what you'd said the night before. I meant to tell you the next day—" and broke off. "Lola— Please! You can't believe it. You can't!"

"Everybody believes it!" cried her mother. "A dozen people have been to Lola today about it! It stands to reason it must be you. She was alone with you, late at night, and—"

She was pulling at my arm, trying to free Lola. But it wasn't that which licked me. It wasn't that which made me drop my hands. It was Lola herself, who was twisting in my grasp, crying on a note of hysteria, "Let me go! I can't stand it! Let me go! Oh, I wish I were dead! Let me go!"

I let her go. I stood rocking a little, staring at her.

"So you do believe it?" I said. "You do believe it!" And I went, turning on my heel unsteadily, went blindly, without another word—

IT WAS nearly dawn. The sky was faintly pink. I found myself—whether consciously or unconsciously, I hardly knew—near the gates of the cemetery where we had left Gwen. All night long I had walked in bitterness of soul, in wild anger and wilder pain, in frantic resentment at cruel injustice.

Now I went through the great gates and stopped at the grave all covered with flowers, still bright and fresh. I thought, "Gwen, poor baby, you didn't realize how many other lives you smashed when you pulled that trigger!" And the pity of it, the terrible pity of that sweet, young life sacrificed so needlessly, swept over me again. Tears came to the eyes that had been hot and dry all night.

It was just at that instant, that I suddenly remembered something.

It was that one short little sentence of Gwen's, "I've been out mailing a letter." Who would she have been writing to, desperate and driven frantic, that last night, looking for a way out? Who, indeed, but the man?

My teeth had come down so hard on my lower lip that I tasted the blood. I leaned further over the flowers that covered what lay so quietly beneath. I said fiercely under my breath, "I'll find him, Gwen! I'll find him, somehow. For your sake—and for my own! I promise!"

In the next few weeks, a great many people who had seemed to like me heretofore, suddenly remembered that I was not really "one of us." Naturally the breaking of my engagement made matters ten-fold worse. It told my little world here that the girl I loved, the girl to whom my engagement had already been announced, did not believe in me. It turned what might have been just vague whispers into definite accusations.

They didn't tar and feather me or try to lynch me. It was all underhand. But averted glances, and eyes that would not meet mine, and a sudden cessation of invitations, all said what they were thinking. And the Rexfords were not

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there to stand by me. They were far away on the ocean.

Lola's people had sent her to Florida. Sometimes I felt I'd have liked to have gone away myself. But running away would have meant admitting guilt. No, I wouldn't go! I'd stay on and find the dog who was really guilty, and make him admit it. So I set my teeth and stayed. My cheek-bones grew more prominent, and my mouth became a hard, straight, line. All the time I was quietly investigating Gwen's crowd, by one device and another getting the names of the boys she had known best.

She'd been dead five weeks when I ran into Vee one day, Christmas-shopping, and drove her home. Her big eyes were intently on my face, as we rolled off. She said, "You don't look like you used to!"

"No?" I could not keep the sardonic bitterness from my voice. "Queer, isn't it?"

"*Oh!*" It was a breathless little exclamation.

"Even you, Vee, if I'm not mistaken, hesitated for a split second just now before you got in this car with me, didn't you?"

"No!" she cried violently. "Or if I did, it wasn't for the reason you're thinking! It was only that—oh, Roy, can't you see? Just now while folks are spreading these wicked lies about you, I—I didn't think you needed to be seen around with—with a girl who's been talked about a good deal herself, that's all!"

I'll swear I was too choked for a minute to speak. "Vee," I said huskily, "if that's true, get that crazy notion out of your head! Because if ever a chap needed friendship, I do!"

That is how I happened to spend Christmas Day with Vee. And when I kissed her, that night, as I left her, she did not turn her lips away. All next day I remembered that kiss.

Perhaps it was because I was so lonely and so hungry for Lola and so anxious to escape those haunting pictures of Gwen that Vee became, after this, so irresistible to me. I couldn't keep away from her evenings. I knew perfectly well—whether I admitted it or not—where we were probably drifting. And over and over I'd swear to myself that I'd keep away for awhile. But I couldn't. As soon as I got back from work, I'd begin wanting to see her, with a restless longing. Thinking of her gaiety, of her sweetness, of what a good chum she was—thinking of the rounded curves of her, of the way her eyes shone, of the velvet fire of her lips. And I'd go to the telephone and dial her number in spite of myself.

I was not, in the meantime, making much headway in my search for the chap to whom Gwen had written that last letter, though I was surer and surer of my theory. Somebody had certainly received a letter from Gwen after her death, and that somebody had kept very quiet.

It was late in January that I saw Lola one day, just back from Florida. I was standing at a drug store when an unforgotten voice at my shoulder said hesitantly, half-breaking, "Roy!" I turned, and there she was, her bright hair shining from under her small hat. I looked at her, so beautiful, so lost to me, and all my loneliness and bitterness crystallized into an anger that was somehow cold and deep and yet blazing—I lifted my hat, and left without a word.

It was that night that I went to see Vee. We were alone in the house. A fire was glowing in the big grate, and I reached out and snapped off the lamp, leaving us with nothing but the flickering firelight. I took her close in my arms, there on the shabby old couch, and held her and kissed her as I'd never kissed her before.

"Vee—" I groaned. "You're so sweet, so sweet!"

Her little hands moved lightly over my face. She said in a whisper, "You were so unhappy when you came tonight, weren't you? My poor Roy!"

"But not now, Vee! Not now! Not with you in my arms—kiss me again!"

She turned in my arms, there on the wide couch before the fire. She said, her lips on my cheek, "It's because I love you so—" in a voice that broke. I pressed her closer. Oh, but she was sweet!

Later, much later, I thought—what if Vee had let other men make love to her? Didn't sweetness and loyalty and unselfishness count, too? I held her close and ached with tenderness for her.

I tried to tell her this, my cheek on hers. I tried to let her know that to me she was so utterly lovely, that I didn't care what her past had been.

I felt her stiffen in my arms, and after a moment she drew herself away. She said, very quietly, "Yes, I see. Yes, I understand."

She drew herself out of my arms and stood up smoothing her hair. Then she snapped on the lamp, and I caught my breath. She was so beautiful. Beautiful in a different way, somehow. She was looking at me, and the steady, shining, sweetness of her gaze seemed to hold a curious sadness. She bent over me suddenly, and put her lips on my forehead, and there was something so final, so like a last good-by in the little caress, that I came to my feet, perplexed.

"Vee—" I faltered.

"It doesn't matter so much what people think you are, after all, Roy, does it? Injustice hurts—we know that, you and I—but it's what you really are that counts. I never saw that so clearly before."

I said again, "*Vee—*"

"About my mother—I want to tell you. I found out things about her before I was fifteen. She isn't bad. She's just—just blind on one side. In lots of ways she's sweet. She loves me, and she's my mother. When it came to choosing between parting with her or staying and letting everybody think I was—that way—too, I chose to stay."

"Vee—please!"

"No, don't touch me." She was standing by the door now, one hand on the knob. Her eyes were shining, as eyes shine through a mist, softly bright. "I was fool enough to love you, Roy. Oh, it doesn't involve you in anything, it doesn't obligate you for anything, because I knew all the time you didn't love me. But before I tell you good-by—"

"*Good-by?*"

She said again, and the level voice faltered just for a heart-beat, "Before I tell you good-by, I think I'd like you to know—to understand—" She stopped; she stood very still there, one small hand clenched on the door-knob.

"Vee—" my own voice sounded hoarse to me, and strange, and my blood was beating in my ears—"are you trying to tell me that there hasn't been anybody else—ever?"

Then, for the first time since I had known her, anger flared suddenly on her face.

"Oh, blind," she cried passionately,

"and stupid and cruel—not to know, not to *know!*"

The door slammed shut in my face. The knob stuck, and I swore frantically under my breath, wrenching at it. When I reached the hall she was clear up the steps; and when I would have followed, I heard a door upstairs slam, too, and the key turn in its lock.

I didn't do much sleeping that night.

The next morning I called her. But she said, "No, Roy—no!" and hung up, and I sat staring at the receiver with a cold, heavy lump in my breast. She had written "Finis" to our relationship, and she was right—she was right—

If I could go to her—if I could say, "But, Vee, I love you with all my heart; there is no other image there—" would that be different? Might she forgive then? But was it true? Could I tell her there was no picture still of Lola's face, no memory of her the night she had sent me away?

TOO restless and unhappy to work, I left the office in the middle of the afternoon. I was walking about rather aimlessly when I met young Doug Bradley. Lola's brother, Neal, had introduced us at a dance one night.

As he fell in step beside me I tried to make conversation. The last time I had talked to him was just after Gwen's death. He had been horribly upset by the tragedy. I knew he was a frequent visitor at the Courts, and that he must have seen Lola often during the days since she had joined the ranks of the deserters. Suddenly I wanted to ask about her—what she was doing—where she was, but was relieved when he broke the ice himself.

"I—I'm glad I met you, Mr. Cramer, because I've been wanting to say to you—wanting to tell you I'm on your side—" he hesitated. "Miss Court's brother is a pal of mine, you know, and I've been in their house a lot. It's such a darn *shame!* The way they've treated you, I mean—the things Mrs. Court said—"

"That's white of you," I said, really touched by his fumbling words.

"I've tried to tell Neal—I've talked myself hoarse! Why, Gwen was always talking about you. You were like her uncle—or big brother! She said in that very last letter—" he stopped suddenly, caught himself— "said something like that about you in the last letter I ever got from her."

"That very last letter—that very last letter—that very last letter—" The words were shouting themselves over and over in my brain while every sense sharpened, as though my blood said, "Here he is—here is the one who caused all the grief—but this youngster—"

"Say!" The boy's voice had thinned to a mere husky thread of a whisper; his eyes were on me, wide and dark with terror. "What's the matter? What are you looking at me like that for?"

I said softly, "I want to talk to you. Come in here." I closed fingers of steel over his arm and led him into a small, quiet cafe we were passing, and ordered coffee for us both.

We sat across the table from each other, our eyes on each other. Suddenly, without a word of accusation on my part, he put one hand over his own eyes. He whispered, "How did you know?"

"The letter. The last letter. She mailed it that night. She told me so—so it was you? And you've kept still all this time!"

He took his hand away, and his eyes—why, they looked like the eyes of a rabbit I'd caught in a trap once! That same wild, dumb, terror and agony and despair.

"Do you think I haven't tried a hundred times to tell? I didn't have the nerve, I tell you, but I'm glad you know, I'm glad! Because now I'll get the nerve—I'll do what I've been wanting to do!" His voice was rising. "I'll kill myself like Gwen did and leave a note saying I was to blame—and that will be better than this, better than this! I've been in hell. I've been in hell!"

"And where," I asked grimly, "do you think I've been?"

"Not in a hell like mine, oh, not like mine!"

Why, he was just a kid, just a slim, blond kid, and he was suffering the torments of the damned themselves!

"I never meant to harm her. If only she'd told me I'd have done something about it! There was just one time last summer—and then we decided we were too young, and it mustn't happen again, and it didn't!" The words were rushing out, as if the torrent had been damned a long time and it was a relief for it to burst forth. "I didn't know how things were with her—not till after she was dead and the letter came telling me—saying I mustn't blame myself, but she couldn't take it, and she was going to

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find some way out. You'll never know what it's been. I've felt like a murderer! You don't know—I dream of her all the time. I'm going crazy, I think—crazy! I'll be glad to get out—glad to go like she did and leave a letter clearing you—"

"Hush!" I put my fingers on his wrist. "Hush, Doug—let me think."

Yes, I'd found him, the man I'd sworn to find. And he wasn't a man, but a broken child. Where was my great revenge now? I thought, "Oh, Gwen, my dear, wherever you are, you must know by now what a terrible mistake you made! You wouldn't want anybody to suffer any more than all of us already have for that mistake!"

I felt the terrible pound of the boy's tortured blood through that wrist beneath my fingers. And I knew what I was going to do.

I said gently, "Listen—get hold of yourself, and listen, please! We aren't going to have any more suicides, Doug, with another half-dozen broken hearts as a result. Get this straight. You didn't kill Gwen. *She* did that. The responsibility for losing your self-control last summer—that is yours and hers jointly. But the responsibility for her death isn't yours."

I'd never seen a look like that on anybody's face—the terrible hopefulness of it! His fingers closed over my hand like a child clings in the dark. He faltered, "If I can believe that—" and began to cry with great gulping sobs. After a little he choked out, "There's what I've done to you—that's got to be set right—"

I shook my head.

"No. I don't care about that any more." And strangely it was true! "Only Lola matters—and the only thing that would help would be for her to believe in me herself—of her own accord. It's too late for anything else—"

He looked at me with a worship that was disconcerting to me, when I told him good-by nearly two hours later.

I THOUGHT, at first, when Lola rang my apartment bell at eleven o'clock that night, that it had happened—the only thing I'd said would help. For her eyes were like stars, and her eyes were glowing. As soon as I opened the door she flung herself wildly in my arms.

"Oh, Roy, Roy, everything's all right. You're going to be cleared before everybody! Can you forgive me? Roy, I love you so—I had to come, I couldn't wait!"

The fragrance of her was in my nostrils, the face I had longed for and dreamed of was close to mine. But I stood stiffly.

"Even Mother is convinced now—Roy, I've nearly died without you! Read it—it came by Air and Special Delivery—Roy, Roy, I'm so ashamed, but you do love me still, don't you?"

She was handing me a letter, as the incoherent words poured out. It had a New York post-mark I noted, and I drew the two sheets from the envelope and saw Earl Rexford's signature at the end.

"Read it!" she cried again, the sapphire eyes shining through her tears. And I read, a bit dazed.

Dear Lola: We reached New York yesterday after a Mediterranean cruise. Cousin Bert met us at the boat. It was from him that we learned of the horrible things that have been said about Roy Cramer and the breaking of your engagement to him.

I can't think of a more unlikely subject for rumor to have picked than Roy. He's a peach of a fellow, square and straight and honest, and he loved Gwen almost like we loved her. It's utterly impossible that he could have done this to her.

There's nothing more I can say except this—that when we come back Iva and I plan to make our home with Mother and Dad, and that all four of us mean to urge Roy to come and live with us as one of our family, indefinitely. Yes, there's one more thing, and it's this; that nobody who continues to believe these lies about him can possibly, hereafter, be a friend of ours. Earl."

I stood clutching that letter, and the room swam.

"Roy! Roy, look at me! Roy—*please!*"

A note of fright in her voice now. I looked. Golden hair—bright eyes—pink cheeks—but had her mouth always been that small and thin? I said, "And it took this letter to make you believe in me?"

"No, No! Don't look like that—as if you didn't love me any more. Don't you, don't you? Roy, please, let me tell you! I always believed in you. I knew from the first you couldn't have done it. I thought you'd been indiscreet and that it was unfair to me—and maybe I was jealous—but I knew you hadn't done *that.* I knew you *couldn't.* But don't you see? For my mother's sake, I couldn't marry a man everybody was saying that about, even though it nearly broke my own heart—and it did, it did!"

It was true. Incredibly it was true—all except the last part of it, that she had done it for her mother's sake. She had known I was innocent and she hadn't the courage to stand by me!

"Roy, oh, my dearest—I know I seemed to fail you, but I did believe in you, I did—all the time! Knowing that, can't you forgive me, darling, can't you?"

But that was why I couldn't, exactly! If she had really believed I had done it, and now were truly sorry, perhaps I might have gone on foolishly clinging to the image of her I'd set up in my heart. It was because she hadn't believed it and had sent me off anyway, that that image was smashed in a thousand pieces. It wasn't a question of forgiveness, any more. There just wasn't anything left. But, she didn't understand.

I went to the 'phone when she was gone, at last. It was past midnight, but it didn't matter. I had to speak to Vee! I had to—and *now.* I had to tell her what an unbelievable fool I had been. I had to tell her how I loved her, worshipped her!

Oh, it mightn't be easy, now, to convince her—to show her that she filled my whole heart—to prove to her that I, who had been so ridiculously true to a false god, would be a hundred times truer all my life long to a real one!

But I would prove it! She'd have to believe me. She, who was so utterly honest, so crystal-candid, herself, would recognize passionate sincerety in another! I'd court her, day by day, not even touching her, no, not if it tore the heart out of me—showing her my reverence and my tenderness, I—who had shown her mostly just my passion and my hunger for her.

Yes, I'd win her back for she loved me—she loved me—and she was the kind who loves just once.

So, with my heart beating high I waited for her voice—

Just before it came, just for a flash, it seemed to me I saw Gwen's face. It seemed that she was smiling at me, faintly, trying to ask forgiveness, trying to say, "I'm glad."

Posed by Sonja Henie

The Peril We Shared

[*Continued from page* 25]

vast stretch of blackness. The river, a mile wide in the distance, seethed and roared its grim warning.

WITH the rain lashing against my face, I raised the megaphone and shouted my message to the helpless pigmies below. "This way, folks, a dollar for the destitute. Help your neighbor while you keep yourself dry. The safest spot in town. Benefit performance for the refugees. This way, folks."

My voice carried shrilly through the night, and I saw boats and cars stop in front of the door to propel passengers inside the temporary refuge. In the light of the flares I could see Mark splashing around down there, his slicker gleaming like silver in the rain. Probably it wasn't quite fair, making Mark turn rescuer against his will. But when had I ever been quite fair to Mark? For years I'd let him follow me from town to town, picking up what jobs he could, just to be near me. When everything else failed, he would turn his old Packard into a taxi, as he had all this last year. Grimly he had hung on in the hope that in the end I'd marry him. But somehow, marrying Mark didn't seem just my way to glamorous romance. There was nothing very glamorous about two-fisted Mark Donnelly. He was a scrapper and an Irishman, and the only scrap I'd ever known him to lose was the fight he put up for my love.

"Leta, darlin'," he'd plead, "with show business all shot to the devil why can't you be just settling down and letting a real he-man work for you? I could get a decent job if you'd let me stay in one place long enough."

But it was while Mark was pleading hardest that I had met Ray Staples. After that I guess I couldn't quite see straight, but it seemed to me that Ray was the whole answer to a chorus girl's prayer.

True, he didn't talk much about marriage, but that was what his dark, tender eyes seemed to be saying. And any girl who married Ray Staples, I told myself, could have about everything in the world she wanted—a silver gray limousine, a house in the country, an apartment in New York, months of travel all over the world, jewelry, fur coats, gorgeous gowns, and most breath-taking of all—the glamorous splendor of Ray, himself.

So even if I could love an Irish taxi driver, my mind kept telling my heart, "Wouldn't I be a little fool to give up all that, if there was a chance in the world I could get it?" And if dinners at Ricci's, dancing at the Belair, long Sunday drives to Ray's lodge in the mountains, and his dark eyes caressing mine, meant anything, then I sure was to have that chance. And you can bet I was watching my step with Ray. I made up my mind it had to be marriage, or nothing, in spite of Ray's wild reputation.

I was still shouting up there from the rooftop when Mark dashed up the fire escape and gripped my arm. "We've got to beat it, Leta," he yelled, "The west end of the bridge has just gone down. There's only one way left out of town and that isn't going to last much longer."

"Go on if you want to," I called back. "I'm staying." I lifted the megaphone again and went on with my shouting—"This way folks. Come on in out of the rain. Benefit performance. A dollar for the destitute."

"Leta, you're crazy!" It was another voice—Ray's voice—directly behind me. I wheeled sharply, the megaphone clattering to the ground. Ray stood there, handsome and arrogant, his slicker dripping, his hat pulled down over his eyes.

"I heard you from down there," he went on, "and I've been fighting through that mob for ten minutes trying to get up here. My car is parked further up the hill, stocked with enough food to last a month. I'm on my way to the mountain lodge, and we can just about make it if you come right now."

Ray caught my arm and was trying

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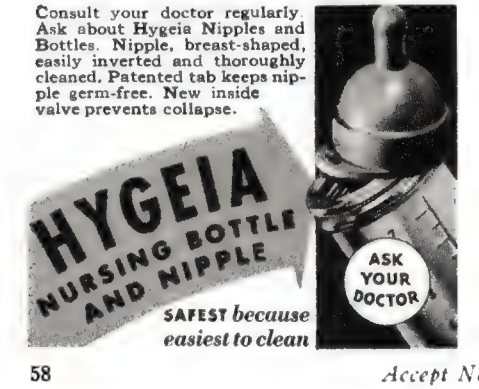

to draw me toward the fire escape. "We'll have to hurry, Leta," he warned, "or we won't make it."

"Not a chance," Mark flung out savagely, and wheeled me around again. "Leta," he exploded, "you couldn't be such a little fool! Don't you understand that this swell-headed cad—"

Ray's fist shot out and caught Mark square on the jaw. Mark slid on the slippery roof and fell to his knees. I knew he was seeing red when he stumbled up and charged toward Ray. I knew also the sledgehammer strength of his punch. I sprang between them, intending only to stop the fight, and caught the blow intended for Ray full on my head.

"Leta, darlin'," Mark cried out when he realized where his blow had landed. He bent down over me and it was then that Ray's second blow caught him off guard and sent him reeling backward, his head against the ledge.

Through a rocking maze I felt myself lifted and carried down the winding iron stairs to the muddy water below. I felt as if my head had been split wide open. There was a warm trickle that must have been blood falling with the rain down my cheeks. Ray was wading in water up to his waist until we reached the higher ground where his car was parked.

I tried to cry out that we must go back for Mark, that we couldn't just leave him there knocked out like that, but the words wouldn't come. Then everything grew blacker even than the night; and swirling waters, deeper than the flood, seemed to be closing in around me.

WHEN I opened my eyes again I was in Ray's mountain lodge, lying on a couch in front of the fire. I was wrapped in a soft, wool blanket and my clothes were spread out on a chair to dry. Ray, in a long brown bathrobe, was striding up and down the floor, smoking savagely.

"We shouldn't have left Mark like that." I stammered out the last words that had been in my mind before the black fog engulfed me.

"He's all right," Ray snapped. "I saw him get up on his feet just as we were going down the stairs. He's a darned sight better off than we are right now. We're trapped up here without a scrap of food and no light."

"But—you said—" I began.

"Sure, I had enough food in the back of the car to last a month, chicken, ham, coffee, canned goods, and crackers, but while I was there at the theatre, some one broke the lock and stole it all. I didn't find out until we got up here, and now I'm hungry as the devil."

"We'll have to go back down—"

"We can't. The road is completely washed out by this time, and we nearly went over the edge on the way up. Besides the food," he went on grimly, "I had candles, matches and kerosene. They took those, too, and now we'll not only starve, but stay here in the dark until morning. There are lamps, but they all seem to be empty."

"You shouldn't have bothered with me at all," I said in a small, far away voice. "I really wanted to stay and go on with the show. I'd be there yet if you hadn't dragged me away while I was blotto."

Outside, the rain was whirling itself against the house, and the wind was howling madly through the trees. My head was still aching terribly, and I could feel a throbbing lump over one eye.

He put his arms around me. "Chin up, Leta," he said. "We have each other, don't we?" His lips crushed down on mine. He held me so fiercely close I felt as though all the turmoil of the world outside had suddenly let loose in my own heart.

I suppose it was partly the stark fear of danger so close. Partly that aching emptiness inside me. Partly that awful feeling of hopeless futility — of being trapped—helpless against the fury of God —knowing that any minute we might be swept away into that surging maelstrom of darkness and death—that made me so completely lose my head.

"Leta," he breathed, "let's forget—tomorrow."

And it was all too easy to forget. This was Ray, the man I loved, the man who could give a girl everything in the world she wanted, and I was here in his arms.

All nature was tortured and raging out there beyond us, but inside now everything seemed safe and warm and still. It was one of those moments when it seemed as if this—right now—might be all the time there ever could be, just this little while, with our hearts beating so wild and close.

"I love you," he whispered, "and I've been wanting you for a long, long time."

"I love you, too, Ray, terribly."

And here we were, cut off alone, forgotten by a tormented world. It seemed, in some strange way, as if our souls right then had nothing to answer to but themselves. We loved, we were together, what else could matter? All those little careful plans of mine were as nothing now. They seemed small and far away.

Ray, too, had forgotten his hunger, his discomfort, and all his irritation. His voice was husky and sweet, whispering all the love words that my heart had waited so long to hear.

He loved me. That meant that tomorrow when somehow we found our way down from the mountains he would make me his wife. In all this chaos there still would be a preacher and a church. There'd be other marriages like that, no doubt, souls hurled together in the storm.

"Leta, my beautiful!"

Nothing now but the flickering flames and the quiet of the room wrapping itself around us.

I AWOKE with the dawn and sprang up with a little choked cry. It all came back, as with the rush of the storm, crowding into my mind like a seething torrent. Ray was standing at the window, looking out upon the rain-lashed mountains.

"There hasn't been a let up all night," he said dismally. "The roads will be completely washed out, and by this time the whole dam must have given away."

Not a word or look for me—the girl whom he had loved last night.

"I'm going down a ways to the nearest houses," he said. "They're still closed for the season, but there must have been some sort of canned food left there. I'm going to get it, even if I have to break in."

"I'm coming, too."

"No, you'd only be in the way." He had started toward the door, buttoning his slicker around him.

"Ray," I said, coming close to him, and trying in vain to make him meet my eyes, "last night still means just as much, doesn't it?"

"That," he exploded savagely, "was last night, and now we've got to face the morning. I haven't the least idea how we're going to get out of here and we're both hungry as the devil."

"But when we get out," I persisted, "you meant, didn't you, that after—last night—we'd be married?"

"Married!" he ripped out, then commenced to laugh hoarsely. "Ye gods, the girl talks of marriage at a time like this! Have you taken a look outside?" He opened the door.

I stood there with clenched hands and watched him sliding inch by inch down the slippery, treacherous trail.

I don't know how long I stood there motionless, but it was long after he had disappeared from sight when I finally turned back into the room.

He'd be right back, of course. Perhaps any minute now I'd see him stumbling up to the door, his arms filled with cans of food. Then when he was fed again, and everything was back to normal, there'd be time enough to plan.

My watch had stopped and I had no way of knowing how long Ray had been gone, but it seemed to me an endless time before I heard a shout outside the door. I sprang to my feet, then uttered a sharp, incredulous cry, when I saw Mark standing there, covered with mud.

I was never so crazily glad to see any one in all my life. His face was smeared with dirt and one of his lips was swollen, but to me he was the most beautiful sight in the world.

He tried to grin crookedly, then stumbled forward and caught me in his arms. "Leta, oh, my girl," he choked, "I wasn't sure—"

"I'm all right, Mark." I tried to keep from sobbing. "But you shouldn't have come. You might have been killed."

"You bet your life I might, along with a thousand or two other poor devils. If you thought it was some party when you left, you ought to see it now. A gasoline tank burst out there near the power house, and it looks as if the whole river was in flames. A chap can't even smoke a cigarette down there now. Even the coast guard surf boats can't get to all the refugees. There are live wires sizzling all over the water and new fires springing up as soon as the rain puts the old ones out. One city, farther down the river, is on fire for five square miles."

"How did you get here?" I gasped.

"I rowed through all hell. I was knocked out pretty cold last night, as you perhaps remember. I heard Staples ask you to come up here, but it was near dawn before I could find my way. I tied my boat to a treetop while I climbed up the trail, then half way to the top I saw a damned rat stealing my boat. There was nothing I could do but yell and by the time I got back he was half a mile up the river. The rat's name happens to be Ray Staples. Swell guy, that! I yelled out that the boat was to get you back in, and he shouted for me to go to the devil."

"You mean," I demanded incredulously, "that Ray went in the boat and left me stranded here even before he knew it was you coming up here after me?"

"You bet your life he did, and the current was carrying him right where he told me to go—straight to the devil."

"But he must have intended to come back. He went only for food."

"Don't make me laugh! He went to save his own skin, and that's that."

Then suddenly he wheeled me around to face the gray light from the window. "Leta," he cried out sharply, "what has happened to you? You're white as a little ghost, and you look a thousand years old. Darling, you've got to tell me— I've been knowing for a long time how crazy you were about him and just how it was going to end, but not even a cur like that could— Leta—*don't*, don't look like that!"

He lifted me in his arms and carried me over to the fire. He sat for a long time holding me close like that, not talking any more. My eyes must have answered his heartbroken question, for I saw his own grow suddenly dark with pain.

"But why would Staples go down for food?" he demanded at last. "He told you there on the roof that he had enough to last a month."

"Someone stole it," I explained bleakly.

"Then, Great Scott, you haven't had anything to eat since yesterday!"

"Since yesterday noon, but somehow I can't seem to make it matter."

"Come to think of it, neither have I. And it matters a heap. We're going to get out of here before we both starve and while there's a ghost of a chance that we can."

"You don't think there's much chance we can make it, do you, Mark?" I asked.

"About one in a million, and I have a feeling this is my lucky day. "It's going to take about all the nerve you've got, but here's betting on you, baby."

As we passed Ray's car, now deep in mud, I started to walk toward it, but Mark drew me back. "A car won't do us any good," he explained, "the road is all washed out. In some places it's scarcely a foot wide, and that's where we crawl."

And crawl we did, with hundreds of feet stretching into eternity below us.

"Close your eyes, Leta," Mark warned,

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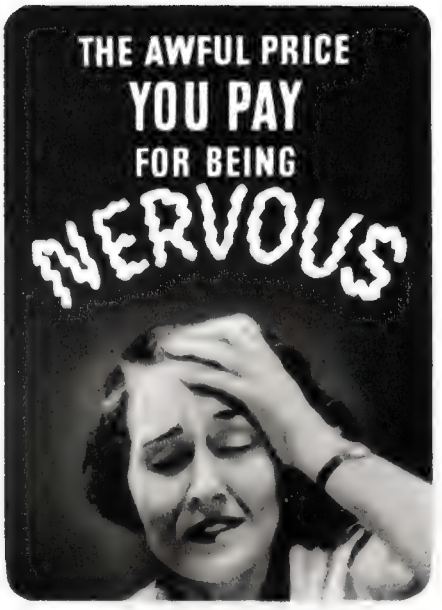

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TOMORROW ALRIGHT

"and let me lead you." Inch by inch he drew me forward, one hand clinging to the rock, and his feet sliding perilously along the narrow ledge. The mountain road was supposed to be one of the greatest engineering feats in the State, and it had been washed away overnight like so much sand. The valley below was strewn with the vast avalanche of sodden earth.

And still the rain poured down, lashing across our faces and drenching our clothes to the skin. Once Mark swerved and swayed a little and I saw him press his hand against his head. "Steady, Leta," he cried hoarsely, "we're going to make it. We've got to. There's too much for us on the—other side."

What was there now, I wondered? We stood there, helpless atoms in a world being destroyed. Dear heaven, did we have one chance of coming through alive?

"Sure, we'll make it," I gasped, "it's getting wider now every minute."

Soon we were able to let go of the rocks and walk erect. The road was still steep and ankle deep in mud, but only a little way ahead now we could see the dark brown swirling water. At last we had crawled over to the edge of it.

"It was here I tied my boat," Mark explained.

We were aghast, looking about us.

"This isn't real," I gasped, "it can't be. Look, there's a desk floating upside down!"

"That's the answer, Leta," he shouted, "quick, take hold of me!" He struck out wildly, and before I realized what was happening, he had swung me beside him on top of it, our arms grabbing frantically at the edge.

"Some darned thing is keeping it afloat," he choked. "Heaven knows what!" One of his arms was gripped around my waist.

"If anything happens, Leta," he said hoarsely, "and this thing doesn't get us there, or we hit the live wires, there's one thing you've got to know—I love you like the very devil, and if we make it, you've got to marry me. Get that, Leta! I'm not asking you this time—I'm telling you."

"I get it, Mark, and you're swell."

"Leta—look ahead— It's the west end of Main Street bridge. broken clean across the middle. Get ready now, we're going to jump for it—right now, as we pass the broken beam. Hold onto me tight Don't let go for a minute. Steady now—"

Panting, his face grim and set, Mark swung forward and caught a broken beam, while I still clung there to his straining body.

"We made it, Leta—steady now—don't look at the water—crawl along until you get to the rail, then the rest will be easy."

At last we stood there on the sagging span of the bridge. A few feet behind us was the vast, churning expanse of water where the other end of the bridge had sunk, but ahead was the city street where boats still wallowed in the wreckage to salvage the few left behind.

A boat manned by two white-faced coast guards heard Mark's wild shout, and they gazed out at us with haunted, incredulous eyes. They couldn't be seeing it—and yet they were—two storm-lashed figures, a man and a woman, clinging there to the crazily careening bridge. Somehow they got the boat within reach and we were drawn inside. Just where we had come from, heaven only knew, surely they did not. It would be just one more unbelievable story for them to tell when the horror was all over.

Strange, too, that it should be to the old Opera House on the hill they now took us. It was the one remaining refuge in the tortured city. We rowed inside and found both balconies filled with cots and under the command of the Red Cross. Deke Ludlow was there in his shirt sleeves obeying orders, his round face perspiring and transfigured. The whole girl chorus was there, too, flying from cot to cot, with hot water bottles and bandages, and putting on the greatest act of their lives.

"We'll take time out for a bite to eat," Mark whispered, "and then we'll get busy. We seem to have just started."

I never before had known what it meant to see souls suffer so much and live; to suffer myself, and yet somehow keep on. Most of them had just seen everything and everyone they loved swept away. Some had fought valiantly to save something from the wreckage, and had saved themselves only by some miraculous mistake. They did not want to live now, not with everything else they had lived for gone. But doctors and nurses and Deke Ludlow's whole troupe fought with a fierce determination to pull them through. And strange, not one of the troupe even knew I had been gone.

They had rigged up an old battery radio set there and from time to time we heard reports of suffering greater than our own. Where, dear God, was the rainbow?

Through all the rest of that day I saw Mark working like mad. I did my best, too, though. My head throbbed sickly. At least I was sane and human. These souls we were nursing were battered beyond belief and babbled incoherently of terrors they had lived through.

My own little tragedy faded into sorry insignificance. What was one broken heart, more or less, and pride trampled in the mud? A rat had scampered from a sinking ship—what of it—in the face of all this? I merely had thought he was a man. The real men were out there fighting, and Mark was with them, giving all he had.

The flood was no longer just something you read about in the newspapers. These men and women weren't just shadows flashed on a screen. It all became too heartbreakingly real, the most starkly real thing I'd ever lived through.

It was life, the biggest show on earth, that now must go on, and I was desperately ashamed that I had wanted to turn it into a publicity stunt.

And then, suddenly, as it grew dark outside, it seemed as if a strange, unearthly stillness dropped down upon the place. The crackle of the radio was the only sound. A voice eerily far off came through the tear-ridden space!

"*It has stopped raining in the valley.*"

"*It has stopped raining in the valley.*"

Over and over the magic words carried hope to the shadowy corners.

There were no windows within reach of us there in the gallery, but Mark and I, springing forward together, groped toward the stairway that led to the roof.

There were other little huddled groups up there, gazing toward the sky.

"Leta," Mark whispered, "Look! It's a star, see it up there at the edge of the cloud. Our star, sweetheart. And the moon, Leta, shining through."

I turned to him, my voice choked with sobs. "Darling," I breathed, with a swift, sure knowledge pouring through me, "if I could tell you all that's in my heart right now, you might not be able to believe. I learned it while I was working down there today. It was like a light—just like that light up there—shining through, and it was—*you*, Mark!"

"Don't, Leta, you don't have to say any more. I love you. You love me. *It has stopped raining in the valley.* What else in the world can matter?"

Posed by Sonja Heme

I Loved a Gangster

[Continued from page 27]

grinning at me across the footlights.

Then came the great shock. I arrived home from the show one night to find Mother waiting up for me. She appeared grave and nervous. I was impatient to get dressed, for despite the late hour I had a date with Jack.

"You can't go out tonight with him!" Mother greeted me.

"Mother! Why not? We're going to a grand penthouse party uptown."

"You can't," Mother insisted. "Jack isn't a real estate man. He is Jack Diamond, the gangster!"

My knees gave way. I trembled violently. Now I could understand why he had always wanted to dine at secluded spots, why he shielded his face in public.

But I loved him. I told Mother so.

"I forbid you to see him again!" she shouted.

Then followed a terrific scene in which I ran out of the apartment, with my hat and coat. I waited for Jack downstairs at the door.

THAT wasn't a happy evening. But it was a revealing one. It was a turning point in my life. My life would have been different if I had obeyed Mother that night. Just how wrong I was in disobeying her, I know to my bitter sorrow now.

But our love outweighed Mother's common-sense advice.

Then came the second blow. Jack told me about his wife. His admission that he was a gangster was bad enough. But a wife, too! My tinsel world was crashing to the earth. My life was tarnished.

But I did not once think of giving him up. Our love was wrong, horribly wrong, yet there was nothing either of us could do about it, I thought. I loved him too much.

Finally summer came. I had to make a tremendous decision then. It was the decision that shaped the rest of my life. It was the decision that moulded many a heartache.

Mother pleaded for me to go back to Allston for the summer. Jack insisted that I come to the Catskills. He could not live, life would come to a standstill if I did not come with him, he whispered, that last night in New York. I went to the Catskills. Mother went back to Allston.

Jack had a twelve-room house where we made our headquarters. Jack's housekeeper and two relatives of Jack's looked after the place.

It was a fairyland in the mountains. That summer I lived a gorgeous dream, a chapter out of a romantic novel, disturbed only by long midnight rides to mysterious places where Jack had business dealings.

Then came catastrophe. Jack and I had been out for a ride that evening. When Jack brought me back to the house he did not go in.

"I have to go down to Catskill on business. I'll be back shortly, Kiki."

I went inside and sat in the living room listening to the radio. A half hour later there was a knock at the door. I opened it. A tall state trooper stood there.

"Are you Miss Roberts?" he asked.

I said that I was. He told me that I must accompany him to the county court house. We rode past an inn. Windows were broken and there was a crowd about. My heart stood still.

Jack had been shot. The trooper did not tell me, but I knew the signs. I turned on the trooper and refused to give him peace until he told me the details. He finally quieted me by telling what had happened. Gangsters had fired on Jack. But he was not dead, yet he was critically wounded. They would not let me see Jack. He was on his way to a hospital. The troopers were holding me for questioning.

As I was led into the court house at Catskill I received a terrific shock. In the hall stood Mrs. Diamond, Jack's wife. She had been on her way up from New York to see Jack and had been caught in the troopers' net.

Often I had visioned the moment when

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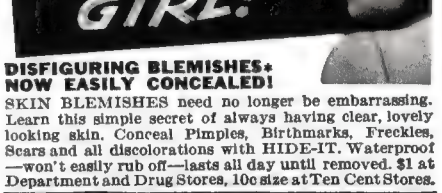

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I should meet Jack's wife. It would be an agonizing experience, I had imagined. Mrs. Diamond smiled warmly at me. I could not understand it.

Later Jack's housekeeper told me that Mrs. Diamond had amplified that smile with words, for troopers standing about. "Oh, Miss Roberts is okay," she said. "She is just one of Jack's playthings. He's always had a toy, you know." She could justifiably have said much blacker things.

The troopers released me when they realized that I knew nothing of Jack's enemies. More tense moments followed this event. Jack recovered, but I was unable to see him for weeks. The police kept him guarded. Finally we were reunited in New York.

When we arrived back in New York, the newspapers linked my name with Jack's. Several of the girls in the *Follies* knew of our relationship, but no one ever mentioned it.

WHEN another attempt was made to kill Jack, the newspapers pounced on me, printing pages about me.

Jack and I had been staying at a midtown hotel. Jack left early this evening for his room down the corridor. I arose the next morning at ten-thirty o'clock to go to rehearsal. After rehearsal Jewel and I were walking up the street when a newspaper boy started shrieking, "Extra! Jack Diamond Shot!" I went numb. He had been lying in a hospital all day and I had not known it. Then we bought a newspaper. "*Follies* Beauty Sought," the headline read.

Jewel insisted that I hide out in her house. I was frightened, but did not want to go where police might trace me. So we went to the movies. Many hours later we went to Jewel's apartment. But Jewel had to go out on important business.

Two hours later I heard a racket in the hall. It seemed that an army was approaching.

There was a rap at the door and I ran to the clothespress. It was the police. They searched the place and finally brought me out at gunpoint. They treated me as if I were a gunmoll. I had never even used a gun. I trembled from head to foot.

They took me from the house to a nearby hotel. Then they kept moving me from hotel to hotel. We'd be at one only a half hour when guests would get wind of it and complain that "that awful woman" is in the hotel. Finally they had to take me to a police woman's house. They wanted to keep me out of sight of newspapermen and the public in general. They were always questioning me. But all the time I kept answering, "I don't know, I don't know." And I didn't know who had shot Jack.

Soon I was free again. But free for what? I could not see Jack. He was in the hospital. My only information about him came through the newspapers.

It was agony, not seeing him, not knowing how rapidly he was recovering from his wounds. I knew that with me at his side, he would get well quicker. But this was impossible. Being in love with a gangster was no longer a glamorous existence. But I loved him.

Now I needed a job, so I telephoned Mr. Ziegfeld. I was overjoyed when he said that he would give me a job. But I could not come back with the show because of the bad publicity it might attract. He telephoned George White of the *Scandals* who put me in a road company, under a fictitious name. We started west playing *Flying High*. Mr. White was kind. He warned the girls in the company not to reveal my identity. He threatened to fire anyone who did. They were pals and kept my secret.

Five months passed. Five months without Jack. My whole world seemed to have collapsed. I read that he had been discharged from the hospital. But I did not know where to find him, nor he me.

ONE night I was mooning about my hotel room in Chicago. Later a group of us in the show went to the bar. The girls had a grand time. Everyone was happy but me. My heart longed for Jack.

In tears I fled to my room. Then I took a gamble. I raised the telephone. "I want to talk to Mr. Shaw at the My Own Inn, Catskill, New York," I told the operator. Of course the names are fictitious.

In less than a minute I recognized a familiar voice. Many a time Jack and I had spent a delightful evening at "Mr. Shaw's" place.

"This is Marion Roberts," I blurted.

"You shouldn't have called me. His enemies are shadowing this place," the voice came back.

"But I must see him. I'll go crazy if I don't hear his voice tonight," I cried.

"Okay, Kiki," he said. "I'll do my best." I gave my phone number and put down the receiver.

For forty minutes I sat at that telephone. I hardly moved. Nervously I smoked one cigarette after another. Between cigarettes I cried. Then the phone rang.

"Miss Roberts, Catskill calling," said the operator.

"Kiki!" It was his voice!

"Darling, how are you?" I cried. "I must see you."

"Take the morning train. Get off in Albany. I'll be at the end of the platform."

How well I remember that trip. How impatient I was for the train to go faster, faster! He was waiting at the end of the platform. His coat collar shielded his face.

We kissed each other. What if all the police in the world were watching. I had waited five months for this moment. We went to an Albany hotel. There we were in hiding for several months. I was a wrong, foolish girl and such forbidden chapters in life cannot last.

For us the end came swiftly, tragically, as we had every right to expect. It was that horrible month of December, 1931! My last rendezvous with Jack took place in an apartment in Ten Brouck Street, Albany, New York. Jack was as happy as a kid. He had just returned from Troy, New York, where he had been acquitted of a kidnap charge.

He came to say good-by, but little did we realize that fate and bullets were plotting to make it an eternal good-by. We sat on a sofa, clasping hands.

"Kiki," he said. "You must go home to your mother. I have messed up your life. You must get out of this while there is time. No telling what will happen to me. You go home and find a wonderful husband and be a good wife."

He gave me a fifty dollar bill for trainfare, kissed me tenderly, and left.

What happened at dawn you know. It was screamed in the headlines from Maine to California and around the world. "Jack Diamond Slain By Gangsters!" I awoke at seven o'clock the next morning to hear the newsboys screaming, "Extra! Extra!" So many times, in New York, in the Catskills, in Albany, I had first heard of these shootings, these brutal attacks on Jack's life, from the newsboys shouting "Extra!" that I still hear their shouts in my dreams.

I shrieked, then tumbled to the floor in

a faint. It was the doorbell that brought me to.

I tiptoed to the top of the stairs. I heard the landlady talking to two men. They were tall. To me that indicated that they were cops. They were asking for a red-headed girl. I was registered as Miss Duffy.

Heavens knows why, for the landlady did not know my identity, but at that crucial moment she lied for me. "Oh, the red-haired girl," she said to the cops. "She left here about an hour ago."

That lie saved me. The cops left.

Here for the first time I shall reveal how I eluded the nation's police that day. It has been a great mystery to police since.

I picked up my clothes and rushed downstairs. I had only a half dollar and the fifty dollar bill. The landlady could not change the bill, so I could pay the rent. But the landlady was kinder than any stranger I have ever known. She told me to hurry on and send the money at my convenience. Believe me, I did and along with it a handsome present. I called a cab, but was so frightened that I sat on the floor of the taxi all the way to the station.

I bought my ticket for Boston. I mingled with the crowd and finally got on the train without being detected. Yet there were a dozen cops about.

At every station between Albany and Boston, detectives came aboard the train and looked for me. I went into the ladies room each time. They never found me.

I arrived at Boston's Back Bay station safely and went to my aunt's home. I was months recovering from the horrible shock of losing Jack.

YEARS of grief and heartache followed, for I have paid dearly for those stolen hours with Jack.

This I can say for myself. I had no part in any of Jack's crimes. I knew nothing of the details of his other life. Never once was I arrested.

Once, in 1935, I tried to find happiness on a less reckless pattern—in marriage. It had been Jack's last wish that I should marry.

I was touring Pennsylvania. I was at a smart night club near Easton. One night between shows a girl friend and I sat watching a group of young men drinking. They were doing the job too well and one man in particular became messy. Finally he approached and asked me to dance. I told him that I was not allowed to dance with patrons. With this he rudely grabbed my arm and jerked me out on the floor.

At this point a tall young man emerged as my Sir Galahad. He struck my annoyer on the chin, tumbling him to the floor.

I was introduced to my benefactor. He was a prominent amateur athlete and a gentleman. His family owned a brewery in which he held a good position. After this incident he came to the club nightly, showering me with flowers and presents. We fell in love and were married.

But Jack—his name, too, was Jack—left me after three weeks. I won't mention his last name, to save him embarrassment. It wasn't his fault, it was his family's interference and the fact that I once loved a gangster that ruined our marriage. Again I was paying the price for my illicit love.

As I said, the marriage lasted three weeks. Jack and I were living at the club where I danced.

On our last evening together I could see that something was troubling him. I asked him what he was worrying about.

"Nothing, dear," he said. "But I want you to go on to Philadelphia alone. Finish your booking. I'll join you there."

"Why, darling," I said. "I'll quit now so that we can be together."

Finally he told me.

"There is no use ducking the issue. It's my family. They fired me from the brewery job today."

"They still object to me," I sobbed.

I went on to Philly. Jack remained with his family.

I know he meant to join me. But he never arrived. He did not answer my letter. Meanwhile I knew how his family was remembering my past and painting an unpleasant picture of me to my husband of three weeks.

Finally I received a letter from Canada. He had run away from his family. He would make a fresh start, get a job and then send for me.

Months passed. Then came a letter. But it was postmarked from Jack's home city in Pennsylvania.

It contained divorce papers!

So I am back dancing again.

Today to my everlasting sorrow I realize that my life with Jack Diamond was a terrible mistake. I am only twenty-six years old. My recklessness, my defiance of the moral code has barred me from woman's priceless heritage — marriage. Stolen love is wrong, for the price is too great. I have paid dearly.

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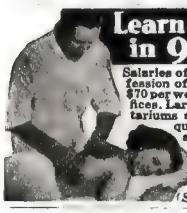

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Secrets of a Barge Girl

[*Continued from page 37*]

Posed by Sonja Henie

face. I longed to pour out the whole wretched story, but somehow I could find no words. "I had to get away," I said at last. "But I can't stay here on the island. Mat will find me again."

"You're going to leave Mat to me," he declared grimly. "And you shall stay here as long as it seems the thing to do. But as soon as you're strong enough, I have a better plan. How would you like to join the cruise of the *Sea Nympth*? We should have been on our way long ago, but something about that diary kept pulling me back to my island."

"*Your* island?" I cried out with a flash of resentment. "This has been *my* island ever since I can remember."

"Let's say—our—island, then," he laughed. "It probably is just an accident that it happened to be in my family for a generation or two. Dad and I built this old fishing shack when I was a kid. After he died I banged around the world for a while, then came back here intending to build a house, but I found little Carla and her book. They seemed to have moved right in and I had a notion I wanted them to stay."

"You mean," I gasped, "that it's your land, and that Dad and I just—squatted? I suppose I should have realized, but no one ever came here or claimed it, so we thought—"

"Sure, and it was a swell idea. You can keep on living here as long as you wish. There's plenty of room for a dozen houses. It used to be the site of a canning factory my folks owned. I believe it burned down and I suppose that accounts for the pile of bricks and the old pier. And now, what about the cruise? I can't just go off and leave you here alone, not now, when there seem to be so many reasons why I shouldn't."

I tried to realize what a cruise on board the luxurious *Sea Nympth* with this handsome stranger might be like, and my heart began to beat fast with excitement.

"You'll be chaperoned by my old skipper and the crew," he assured me, "and I promise plenty of adventure."

But I wasn't trusting anyone again, not even Thorne, who had grown so real to me when I read the message he had left in my diary. "You make me want to believe in love again," he had written. But I never should believe in it again, never as long as I lived.

"I'm through with the sea," I told him, and tried to keep my voice cool and steady. No other man should find me rushing toward adventure with the glad, free eagerness I had shown to Mat.

"So, you're through with the sea," he mused, "just as I am beginning to find her again. I can't quite believe it, Carla—not you, a captain's daughter. I was rather counting on you to teach me a lot about the sea."

Mat had said something like that, too, and I shuddered now, remembering.

Once I might have rushed out to meet Thorne's eagerness with my own, and would have followed joyously wherever he led. But memory now of Mat's hard, cruel kisses, of his mocking laugh when I had pleaded for marriage, seemed to be closing cold hands around my heart.

"I'm through with the sea," I repeated with tightening lips.

"They hurt you a lot, didn't they, Carla, and killed something in you I wanted to keep? I wish I had found you first."

Suddenly I wished it, too, but nothing could make me forget that bitter awakening when I had faced the hard gleam of Mat's eyes.

"Anyway, I'm not going to leave you here alone until you're stronger," Thorne declared. "If you won't come on the cruise, I'll go tell the skipper to stand by."

He wrapped a blanket more closely around me and moved a tray of food to the side of the bed. A moment later I heard his motor chugging across the bay.

I POURED a cup of coffee, ate some cold chicken and toast, and took a sip of wine. Strength came back quickly after that and my head grew clearer.

I reached for the diary under my pillow to read what Thorne had added to that last page. My cheeks flamed as my eyes flew over the final paragraph I had written there. I had called out to him in heartbreak and I had used his name. "That couldn't really have been love, Thorne," I had written. "It killed all the dreams."

"No, sweet Carla," Thorne had scrawled in answer. "I'd like to kill the man who took your innocence and smashed the dream. I wish I had the right to make you happy and to bring back your faith in love."

I lay for a long time with the book held close against my cheek. Now that Thorne had gone, the whole room seemed filled with him. I could see his grave, blue eyes and hear his deep, tender voice. But no, I mustn't let my heart pound like that or feel that quick rush of emotion, for that was the way I had felt when Mat first held me in his arms. All my life I had longed to be loved, and then love had hurt me as nothing else ever could.

I had learned too late—or perhaps too soon—the bitter lesson that life drills into a girl. I couldn't rush out to meet love now with eager eyes and outstretched hands.

A cruise on board the *Sea Nymth* with Thorne sounded like enchantment, yet how was I to know that it would be any different in the end from that horrible night on board the old barge with Mat and those other men? Perhaps there'd be men with hot, seeking eyes on board the *Sea Nymth*, too. And perhaps if Thorne kissed me, everything would change, as it had after that first hour with Mat.

And so life had taught me to be afraid.

It was growing dark when I finally tried to get up again. I put on a pair of my old slacks and a sweater and went out to look across the bay. My legs were still a bit unsteady and my head throbbed with pain, but strength was pouring back and by tomorrow I'd be all right again.

Then I saw a motor boat speeding across the water, and in spite of all I could do, my heart leaped in glad relief. Thorne was coming back. But the next instant I heard a hoarse shout and it was Mat who sprang to the pier and ran toward me.

"You little devil," he cried out, "I knew I'd find you here. So you did let me down, after all?"

"I hated it," I said. "I'm not going back."

"Sure you are, right now, and make it snappy. We're pulling out for San Fran-

cisco. We cleaned up, but things are getting too hot around here. Come on, I've got to get going, and don't forget, you're still my girl."

"I'm not anybody's girl," I cried fiercely, and fought against the rough, hard pressure of his arms. When his lips crushed down upon mine I swung a feeble fist against his face.

"If you touch me again I'll—kill you," I sobbed, and tried with all my strength to fight him off.

"I like you that way," he laughed. "You're prettier when you show a little fire."

He had lifted me in his strong arms and was carrying me toward the pier. "When I say a girl's mine," he taunted, "I mean she's—*mine*!"

Then across the water I saw a streak of light. It played upon Mat's boat and flashed across my face. In a momnet more I heard Thorne's shout and the powerful hum of his motor. There was a splintering crash as the launch struck across Mat's bow and sent the smaller boat careening toward the sand.

A curse tore from Mat's throat, and he hurled me back to the beach. I lay there stunned for a moment, then stumbled up just as Thorne sent Mat crashing down beside me.

"Carla," Thorne cried out, and bent down over me. "Are you all right? I shouldn't have left you. Did he—"

He broke off then, for with a snarl Mat had lunged forward and caught at Thorne's knees. Thorne straightened and gripped him in a fierce hold.

"Running a gambling ship is one thing," Thorne spat out, "and kidnaping is another. If you know what's good for you, you'll clear out."

"I'll get you for this," Mat blustered. "Both of you—"

"*This* is what you'll get—and this—!" Thorne's body seemed made of steel and iron, and in the end he left Mat sprawled on the sand.

"I'll send one of the crew back to pick up the pieces," Thorne said, and lifted me into his boat. "You're going back on board the *Sea Nymth*, Carla. I have everything ready for you."

As I saw the sails of the *Sea Nymth* gleaming in the moonlight I remembered Dad's old warning. "A yacht is a plaything of the devil," he had declared, "and you can expect no good of a man who owns one." And this was a very splendid yacht, indeed. The deck glittered with polished brass and fresh white paint. I caught a glimpse of the crew, immaculate in white duck, and could see deep cushioned chairs under a striped canopy.

Thorne led me first to a gaily decorated cabin, and tucked me in between soft linen sheets. "You're to stay here," he told me, "while I make sure that Slattery gets on board his boat. Then we'll be on our way."

I watched through the porthole while Thorne and one of the crew sped back to the island. I could see them lift a struggling Mat to the launch and carry him out to the gambling barge. With a sigh of relief I leaned back against the pillows and closed my eyes. Everything had been taken out of my own hands.

When Thorne came back, his eyes were dancing. "That finishes Mr. Mat for a while," he declared. "He wasn't too badly hurt and we left him on the deck of his own ship." A moment later I felt the movement of the boat, and knew we were underway.

"I went shopping after I left you this morning," Thorne said, "and I bought a few of the things a well dressed lady sailor should wear." He opened the door of a mirrored wardrobe and I saw a white flannel sailor suit trimmed with red braid, a white cap, and a wool sweater. There were rose satin pajamas, a lace negligee, and an evening dress of lustrous blue velvet. He opened a drawer and I saw sheer silk hose and a pile of lingerie. On a shelf I caught a glimpse of silver sandals and white duck shoes.

"There'll be guests coming on board at San Francisco," he explained, "and we want our adopted sailor girl to hold her own."

I DREW a sharp breath of delight. Then I felt that cold hand closing around my heart again. Mat had bought clothes for me, too, and the very touch of them had become hateful. Somehow just those few days with Mat had spoiled everything any other man could do.

Thorne was watching me with grave, understanding eyes. "Strange," he said, "but I know just what's going through your mind. You see, I've had a few lessons in love, too. I once trusted a woman completely, and then for a long time I couldn't trust any woman at all. Let's not make promises, Carla, but life's too sweet to waste. So make yourself lovely and come out on deck to meet the skipper. He and the first mate will be having dinner with us."

When he had gone I dressed slowly, re-

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membering those other beautiful dresses I had grown to hate, and had left on board the barge. Until such a little while ago I'd never worn a single lovely dress, and in just these few days I'd worn so many, each meaning some different and frightening thing.

When finally I was dressed I saw that my eyes looked dark and excited and that my cheeks glowed red beneath their tan. My heart was pounding too eagerly as I went along the after deck toward the salon.

I could hear men's voices from inside, and through the open door I could see a man in a blue coat, trimmed with gold braid, and a younger man, dressed in white. Thorne saw me and brought them out on deck. He introduced Captain Dunn and Ken Burgess, the first mate.

Some look in the eyes of these men made me suddenly feel very young and lovely and strangely safe.

"So you're the mystery girl of the island," the captain laughed.

"I," Ken Burgess declared, "would like to learn more of her mystery."

It was the tonic I needed and I felt my spirit lift. This was all so different from the night on board the gambling barge, or the old days when Dad fought to keep the crew from coming near me. These were like the men I had seen that night in the movies, handsome, well groomed, clear-eyed. I found my heart growing warm and glad again and the icy hand loosened its hold.

Later at the captain's table I realized that I must be the only woman on board, yet they were making me feel that everything was all right. After dinner we danced to the music of a radio and again it was so different from dancing with Mat. When it was Thorne who held me I wished the music would never stop.

"You aren't frightened any more, are you?" he whispered.

"Perhaps the other was just a bad dream," I said, "and now I'm beginning to dream true dreams."

I saw his face cloud a little as he held me closer. "I wish—" he began. "Oh—I wish so many things."

He led me outside to the darkness of the after deck and we sat close together in the shelter of a life boat. He drew me nearer until my head rested against his shoulder. My mind leaped back to that far off, vivid memory. Thorne's face, pale and luminous, seemed like the face of that man I had seen in the passing boat. And I was that other girl, trembling and white, lifting my face to his kiss.

I could feel his heart thumping close beneath my ear, and his arms trembled a little as he held me. "I want to make love sweet for you again, Carla, and yet if I do, I probably shall end by breaking your heart. You aren't for me, darling, and when this is over, I'm afraid I mustn't see you again. But do I have to tell you about it tonight, just so long as I make no promises, and you know that it cannot—must not—last?"

"Why mustn't it?" I whispered.

"Tomorrow I'll try to tell you. Can't we just take tonight for ours, with no questions, and no looking back?"

I felt myself lifted in his arms and carried across the deck to the cabin. The radio had stopped now and everything seemed very still. In the hushed darkness I felt his lips pressed close to mine, and heard the quick, sharp intake of his breath.

"Love me, Carla," he pleaded, "each of us can help the other if we will."

Once, such a little while ago, I would instantly have answered that call. Everything in me would have wanted to love him. But Mat's demands had been too cruelly fierce and had terrified my very soul. I could only tighten my lips now against his kisses and close my heart against its own plea.

He paused a minute, then burst out, "I'll have to tell you—I married a woman, and it seemed to send us both to hell. I didn't want to tell you about her tonight, but I guess I'll have to. I trusted her as you trusted Mat. Perhaps she was no worse, and surely no better, than the other women in our crowd, but she used our marriage as a cloak to cover up a dozen love affairs. She made me despise all that marriage stands for."

I SHIVERED and buried my face against his shoulder. "Dad always told me that marriage was hell, too," I said. "He tried to keep me away from men and warned me never to marry. My mother left him for another man. Perhaps it's just love a girl wants, Thorne, love like this. Maybe she shouldn't really want marriage, after all."

As I talked I saw his face grow dark and the troubled light deepen in his eyes. "Yes," he spoke savagely, "I believe I'm worse than Mat. He killed love for you and now I'm trying to kill marriage. I ought to be shot."

He sprang to his feet and turned toward the door. "You've got to meet other men—decent men—learn the right and wrong of things. You mustn't let me make love to you."

So he left me with my heart aching, yet filled with a new deep down gladness. Thorne meant no harm to me.

Next morning it was Ken Burgess, the first mate, who brought breakfast to me. He was wearing a swimming suit and announced that he had been sent to take me to the pool. "Thorne says there's a bathing suit in your closet," he grinned. "So get ready, and I'll wait on deck for you."

During the rest of that sparkling day it didn't take me long to realize just what Thorne was trying to do. Ken Burgess and the captain had evidently been told to give me lots of attention. We played deck tennis, sat on deck in the sun, danced by moonlight, and listened to one of the crew strumming a steel guitar. Thorne stood by to watch, his gaze a bit tense and brooding, but he did not come near me.

It was Ken Burgess who took me to the after deck that night and led me to the shelter of the life boat.

"There's a crowd coming on board at San Francisco," he said. "And then I'll lose you."

"You mean I'm to leave the boat there?"

"Not if I can help it," he declared, "but you'll be surrounded with Tyra's gang."

"And who—is Tyra?"

He looked at me sharply and hesitated. "She's Thorne's wife. Didn't he tell you?"

"Yes, he told me, but I didn't know she was coming on board."

"You're a bit crazy about Thorne, aren't you?"

"I guess I shouldn't be."

"He told us about you, a week or so ago—the little girl who had been brought up by her dad on the old fishing barge, and who'd never been kissed. We thought he was kidding until we saw you. But you are different, Carla, and those girls in Tyra's crowd are going to scratch your eyes out."

I remembered those other women on board the barge and how they had tried to keep their men away from me. "I've wanted to know other girls all my life," I told him. "Why am I so different?"

"Because you don't know the snappy answers, or the tricks of their little game. You're just your own sweet self, with a natural, wholesome charm, and that, my dear, is to them quite the unforgivable sin. I don't think there's a man in the world who wouldn't want to teach you everything he thought you didn't know, or a woman who wouldn't spread her claws the minute she saw you."

I leaned my head against the life boat and looked up at the stars. My heart was thumping, not because Ken Burgess sat so close, but because of my own dark thoughts.

"Is Thorne's wife very beautiful?" I asked at last.

"Yes," he said in a low, strained voice, "very beautiful indeed. And once I was madly in love with her. Thorne was, too, poor devil."

"And isn't he any more?"

"I hope not, for his sake. But couldn't we manage for just these few minutes to think about you and me? I know that stacked up beside Thorne I haven't a chance, yet I'd better tell you that I'm free and in my right mind, and that I've fallen pretty hard."

"For—me?" I smiled up at him and felt a new, heady sense of power. I guess this was the sort of thing every girl liked to have as her right, and it was what Thorne must have meant by a chance to choose.

"For you, sure enough. You've got something the other girls I know don't happen to have, and it's getting down under my skin. I haven't been able to put you out of my mind since Thorne brought you on board. I don't want to rush you into anything, but from now on I'd like to stick just as close as you'll let me. Thorne sort of dropped a hint that the coast was clear."

"And do you also think that marriage is hopeless?" I asked a bit breathlessly.

HE FLUNG back his head and laughed. Then after a long look into my face, he instantly grew sober. "Not on your life, Carla," he answered. "I think marriage is swell. I've never tried it, but you can bet when the right girl comes along and says 'yes' I'll take a chance."

He tried to draw me closer then, and bent his lips to mine. But I drew quickly away. "I don't want you to kiss me," I said, "or to marry me, either. I just wanted to know if you would."

"You're very young and very dear," he declared, "and curse the man who ever tries to hurt you. I'm afraid some man has, very badly, and I'd like to wring his neck. But get this straight about marriage—I'm still young enough to believe that with a girl like you a man would be a yellow cad to offer anything else."

"Thanks, Ken," I said. "That makes me understand a lot of things better. Now I think I want to go in."

When he had left me, I walked toward where Thorne stood against the rail.

But before I reached him he turned abruptly and walked toward his own cabin. I stood there for a long time watching that closed door, then looked down again at the churning water.

It was then that I saw the face, cruelly familiar, peering up at me from a small boat that was drawing perilously close to the side of the yacht. It was Mat's face, cruel and sneering. He shouted when he saw me and flung up his hand in salute. Then he swerved the launch sharply and sped back across the water. In the distance I could make out the silvered silhouette of the old fishing barge and realized that Mat was following us. He had come alongside only to make sure that I was on board.

I did not stop to think. I just darted into Thorne's cabin and stood breathless, with my back against the door.

"Carla," he cried out, "what has happened? You're white as a ghost."

"It's Mat," I shuddered, and clung to him. "I saw him alongside in a launch. The old barge is out there, just behind us."

"I should have killed that devil. But he can't hurt you again, Carla, you must know that. We aren't going to let you out of our sight."

HE TOOK me by the arm and was just opening the door of my cabin when we passed Ken Burgess in the hall. Ken's eyes met mine in a long look, and I felt the quick color flood my cheeks. I knew just what he was thinking. But it couldn't matter, nothing mattered now, but that Thorne had given me back my faith.

I don't know how long I lay there after he had gone, wrapped in a blissful drowsiness, when I suddenly realized that the motion of the boat had stopped, and that a gray misty light was showing through the portholes. I tried to peer beyond the early morning fog, but could make out only the dim, hazy shapes in the distance. We must have entered San Francisco bay keeping beyond the channel of the big liners.

Then I heard a commotion on deck and the tinkle of high pitched laughter. Evidently a launch had come alongside to let on new passengers. The cold hand gripped my heart again. It must be Thorne's wife and her crowd—those women who were to scratch my eyes out, and the men who would want to teach me everything I didn't know.

I shivered a little and got up quickly to dress. I was just slipping into my white and red sailor suit when I heard a low rap on my door. Thorne stood there for a moment, his face white and strained.

"I just had to kick Mat Slattery overboard," he said. "I found him below deck in the engine room. He must have come on board when we anchored. I waited until I saw his launch pick him up, then gave orders to get underway again."

"He must have been waiting down there for you to go ashore," I shivered. "And he doesn't intend to let me alone."

"He'll let you alone all right," Thorne declared grimly, "and if he follows us back to San Diego we'll hand him over to the police."

"You mean," I said, "that we're turning back?"

"Yes, I intended to go on, perhaps as far as Honolulu, but we've just taken on a few visitors and I think you will be getting homesick for your island."

Then a tall, vividly beautiful woman, with insolent ice-green eyes and flaming red hair stopped at my door and let the others pass by. She darted a quick, searching look from Thorne to me, then inside my cabin to the rumpled bunk I had just left.

"So that's it," she laughed. "I'll admit I was curious. And it probably accounts for your telegram, darling, suggesting that we delay the cruise." She turned to me then, her eyes cold and mocking. "Do I know you, my dear? Surely, as my husband's guest, I should."

"Carla, this is Tyra, my wife," Thorne said quietly.

Still laughing, she turned away and joined the crowd who were swarming the cabin.

"Stay inside, Carla, until I come for you," Thorne said in a low tone. But as he followed her, my heart was cold. I saw the new smoldering fire in his eyes, an old fire which had been rekindled by his wife's vivid nearness. I realized then how a man might love a woman like that with a madness that burned out his very soul, and how he might never be able to get over that love, in spite of all the disillusionment it brought him.

I stood for a moment looking out at the crowd before I closed the door. A tall, dark man, young, but with a hard lined face, had reached out to grasp Tyra's arm. He swung her around right in front of them all, and drew her inside one of the cabins. I heard a note of husky, muffled laughter as their door closed, and I knew that his lips had been pressed to hers.

But any triumph I might have felt was instantly checked when I saw the look on Thorne's face as he too, stood watching. A man did not look like that unless he still cared.

Where will this strange cruise end for Carla? Three men have felt the appeal of her sweet, unspoiled character, so unexpected in an age of sophistication. Will any of the three bring her happiness, or is she fast heading toward disenchantment?

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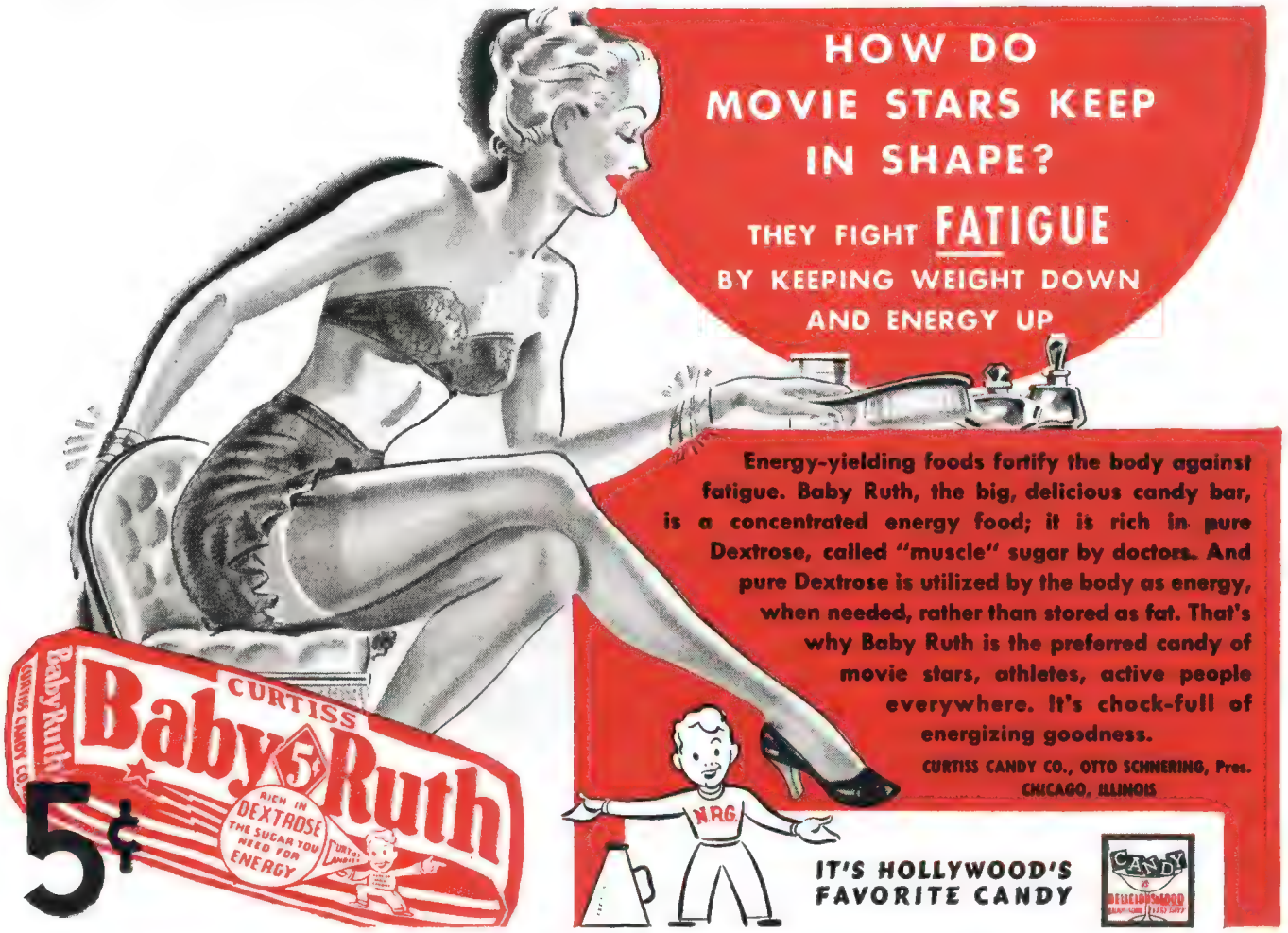

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Posed by Sonja Henie

I Paid His Alimony

[*Continued from page 39*]

At my door Keith bent his head and took my face in his hands. Before I could say or do anything, his lips covered mine and clung in a long, dizzying kiss.

He said huskily, after a long while, "Let me come in, Polly." And I pulled gently away from him, suddenly afraid of him, afraid of myself. I couldn't trust my voice, so I just shook my head, not looking at him.

He straightened away from me, and shrugged slightly, and said, "Right you are." Then kissing my hand in mock gallantry he left.

In the nights that followed we danced to many orchestras. Somehow, I managed to keep things on a light, bantering level. I was afraid of seriousness with Keith. He was so much a bachelor, so accustomed to taking his women lightly. I didn't want him to take me lightly. I wanted him to fall in love with me.

Then one night in my apartment, in the midst of a light conversation, he came over to me deliberately and took the glass from my hand. All the lightness had gone from his face now, and his grasp hurt my arm.

Very deliberately he kissed me, with one hand pressing against the back of my head. I began to tremble all over while his lips clung to mine and his hands pressed gently, firmly against my back, drawing me closer, closer to him. Oh, Keith, my darling, I love you, my pounding heart spoke fiercely.

I pulled away from him finally with a little cry and sank to the couch, covering my hot face with my hands. He was beside me instantly, his arms banded around me so tightly I could think of nothing but his nearness. His lips possessed mine; and the excitement that ran through his veins was transferred to mine. We clung together, trembling.

HOW can such things be? How could I forget all the laws of civilization, all the years of schooling myself and my emotions? How could I forget there were such things as right and wrong?

Afterwards I thought of all these things, and hated myself for my weakness. I felt like weeping, but I couldn't, for wasn't I supposed to be a smart woman? And smart women didn't weep unless they were alone.

Then Keith said finally, "You're lovely, Polly—lovely and sweet and generous. If I were a different person I'd want to marry you. But I'm not a marrying man. You know that, don't you, darling?"

Even though I wanted to die, even though I felt there wasn't any sense to anything any more, even though I felt that I couldn't go on, I managed to say through my constricted throat, "Of course, Keith. I'm not expecting anything."

But it wasn't until the next day, when Art Howell walked into my office that I knew complete desolation. There was something so fine and clean and manly about him. I thought, "If he loved a girl, he would want to marry her. And he would make that love beautiful, not something to be hidden in corners and taken out in the dark—"

He gave me that nice, rather shy smile and said, "You look troubled. I thought I had the corner on that market. You're too fine to have anything bother you. Can I help?"

I wanted to say, "No, no, my dear. Neither you nor anyone else can help me now. And don't twist the knife in my heart by saying I'm fine. If you knew, you would despise me."

But I shook my head and said, "It's nothing. How are you and all your troubles?"

He shrugged, looking down at some papers on my desk. "Oh, I suppose things will work out somehow. Claire has gone home for a while. But I shouldn't bore you with my tale of woe."

I said, "You don't bore me. I wish I could help."

His eyes lighted. "You can help, Polly. You can help a lot by going to lunch with me."

"All right," I said slowly, and I thought, "Why am I doing this when it's Keith I love, Keith to whom I am bound—"

Being with Art, I seemed to get some of his courage, his faith. It was refreshing and heart-warming to sit across from his clear-eyed, honest face. Somehow I couldn't bear to think of Keith and his hot possessive kisses in the presence of this man.

He said, "Claire has gone home for an indefinite stay, and I'm hoping that she'll find she misses me and come back and start over again."

I said, "You must love her a lot," and felt bitterly envious of that absent Claire who could be so indifferent to this man.

"We're married," he answered slowly. "And I'm willing to stick by my vows."

I thought, "Yes, you would. Once you give your word, you stick to it. You're fine and honorable. Any woman would be lucky to have you. If Keith were only like you—"

Keith and I had no more dates after that last night. It was hard to avoid him in the office, but when I turned down his second invitation, he said, "Okay. Let me know when you grow up."

Home, alone, I had plenty of time to brood over what I had done. Very effectively Keith had managed to show me how tawdry our moment of love had been. "Not a marrying man," he'd said. Oh, heaven, my sick shame told me that I, very definitely, was a marrying woman. Sophisticated and modern—two silly words that could never change the meaning of "love" and "marriage."

That was why the sight of Art Howell—decent, sweet Art—to whom marriage vows meant everything, was like a knife turning in my heart. It was because I wanted Keith to be like Art that I was so miserable, I told myself.

I wasn't quite honest, there. When Art came in to me that day and said quietly, "Claire is divorcing me," I knew that it was more than that. Now I dared admit it. I loved Art Howell. Not as I had thought I loved Keith. This that I felt for Art was the fine, clean way that love should be.

Art was saying, "It's a relief, in a way, that it's settled. At first I thought I'd go haywire, but well—life has to go on, I suppose."

"Does she love someone else, Art?"

He shook his head. "No. She just doesn't love me. You see she's very young, only twenty. I married her when she was eighteen. I guess I sort of swept her off her feet. Her family is poor, and marriage to an artist probably seemed glamorous to her. But the glamour wore off. I suppose I shouldn't have rushed her into marriage. I'm ten years older than she."

Then Art showed me the joker. He said, "I average about a hundred a week free-lancing, and I'm going to give her half. I've agreed to give her fifty dollars a week alimony."

I looked at him aghast, and he said, "Well, I certainly can live on fifty a week, and eventually I'll make more. And I don't intend to marry again."

That was a painful blow, and perhaps if he hadn't said it I would have kept quiet, but I blurted out, "You're giving her fifty dollars a week! For the two small years she wasted on you? She's still young and good-looking. For two years you've supported her in a style to which she was unaccustomed, and now you must pay for that privilege for the rest of your life if she doesn't marry."

I was out of breath when I finished, and ashamed of my outburst, but Art said, "Whoa, there. I suggested that amount because I want to be sure she'll be comfortable. And I'm not going to marry again."

I said with forced lightness, "You never can tell," but he didn't look at me. He said, "Let's talk of something pleasant." He smiled suddenly, that rather shy smile that I loved. "Let's talk of you. Polly, you mean an awful lot to me—" He broke off abruptly. "Sorry," he said. "Forget it."

But my heart was bursting and happiness was flaming through me. He'd love me in time. I knew it. He'd *have* to love me.

That next week Art and I lunched together, and there were evenings when we went out to dinner or when I cooked dinner in my apartment. Such heavenly evenings we had together, and I knew Art was happy with me. But how much? Could he love me enough to want me for always? Would I be worthy of him if he did? I knew I loved Art enough to give him up if I thought it would hurt him. But I would be so good to him. I'd make him happy. I knew it.

Now and then into my happiness would come the dreadful thought, "If I had only waited. If I had only waited for Art. I'm not good enough for him."

Then at other times I would think dismally, "But he doesn't want to marry anyway."

His divorce went through. Claire's lawyer asked for fifty dollars a week alimony, and as Art didn't contest it, the court ordered that Art pay that amount. Then Art and I celebrated. We went to a lot of night spots and danced. It was an exquisite joy to be in Art's arms. We had a wonderful time together.

When we reached my apartment, he came in with me. Inside, he caught me into his arms and kissed me for the first time. I put my arms around him and clung to him. My Art. My darling. At last.

He kissed me hungrily. Then he whispered hoarsely, "I wish I had met you years ago, Polly. I wish—"

I drew away from him slowly and sat down and began to cry softly.

He was beside me in an instant. His face sobered suddenly, holding my hands tightly in his. "I'm a louse, darling," he groaned. "I love you and I haven't dared admit it. I want you to be my wife, Polly. I want a try at marriage with you. I want to take care of you and have the right to love you always. Will you, darling?"

I couldn't believe it for a while. Then with my face close to his I cried, "Oh, Art, Art. Of course I will. I've loved you so long—and, Art—the reason I cried then, it's not because—well—there are things I ought to tell you, Art."

He put his hand over my lips. "Just tell me that you love me. That's all I ever want to hear."

We were to be married in June, three months away. I insisted on keeping my job for a while anyway. It was silly to give up sixty dollars a week. And I decided to put off telling Keith about Art until the last minute.

But I had to tell him sooner than I wished. He came to me one day and said, "Polly, you've got to see me. I want to talk to you. Why won't you go out with me?"

I gave it to him straight. "I'm terribly sorry, Keith, but I'm going to be married very soon."

His face flushed darkly, and he stood up and went to the door. "I suppose it's Howell. I know you've been pretty thick

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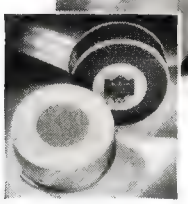

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with him lately. Well, I think you're a fool taking a mortgaged husband. But that's your affair, my dear," and with that he slammed the door.

In a month came the exquisite moment of my marriage, the utter joy of being Art's wife. He was everything I wanted in a man. We were madly in love.

We had a glorious honeymoon in Bermuda, and on our return took a larger apartment in my building. When I returned to the office, Keith was his usual pleasant self, and I settled back into the routine of work, happier than I had ever been. Now after all my years of struggle I had what I wanted. It seemed too good to be true. Sometimes waking up in the night I would think, "It is too good. Something will happen. Something will spoil it."

Two weeks after my return to the office I had to start on a new series of ads for "Cora Lee." Mr. White, the art director, said, "We're putting Tyler on 'Cora Lee.' The chief likes the stuff he's been doing for 'No-Run Hose.'"

I was aghast. "Tyler! But Art's drawings have been very successful. The cosmetic people like him. I don't understand!"

Mr. White looked uncomfortable. "I can't help it, Polly. It's the chief's orders."

I went into Keith's office, upset and uneasy. He looked up at me with a bland smile on his ruddy face.

"Keith, why did you take Art off 'Cora Lee?'"

"Well, Polly, I think he's been going a little stale." Keith looked down at his hands. "Tyler will have a new approach, a new style. Zip things up a little. And you'll find Tyler easy to work with. Now, Polly, I'm rather busy. If you don't mind—"

I stood there for a moment with my nails digging into my palms, seeing red. I couldn't plead with Keith for Art. I couldn't do anything but choke down my resentment and walk out of his office. I was frightened. Keith was doing this deliberately—to hurt me and to hurt Art.

I told Art about it that evening after dinner. There was a bleak look in his eyes. He said, "I can't understand it. It almost seems as if Malton has taken a dislike to me. He took me off two other accounts today."

OH, dear heaven. Art didn't know about Keith and me. How could I tell him now? And how could I tell him what I suspected, what I feared—that Keith was working off a petty spite? How could he—he who had everything, who had always had everything, take revenge on us?

I put my arms around Art and strained him to me, kissing him fiercely, lovingly. "Darling, darling, don't you care. You'll get plenty of work. You don't have to depend on the Malton Agency. Go around to some of the other companies tomorrow."

He held my face in his hands and kissed me many times. "Lovely, lovely, Polly," he whispered. "I'm so glad I found you. So glad I've got you. I've never been so happy before."

We clung together for a long time, almost as if we were afraid. Afraid that our happiness couldn't last, that finally a grim fate was overtaking us.

We were brave enough at the beginning. Everything would be all right tomorrow, we would think. But it wasn't easy for Art to get work. Somehow the story had got around that Malton was dissatisfied with him. Art began to lose confidence in himself.

Every time I saw Keith I could feel the blood rise in my face. I wished desperately that I could leave his employ. But I couldn't. We were depending on my salary now.

Each week Art took fifty dollars out of his pitifully dwindling account to send to Claire's attorney. Finally, there came a week when he didn't have the full amount. He was frantic with worry.

I said, "For heaven's sake, Art, tell her you can't afford it. Tell her you're hard up right now, that you'll send her as much as you can each week until things are better. Certainly she'll understand."

But Art received a curt reply from Claire's lawyer—"Mrs. Howell was sorry, but she couldn't do with less— She had been ill— There were doctor bills—a great many added expenses—"

Art said, "The poor kid, why didn't she tell us she was ill? Polly, what am I going to do?"

I couldn't bear to see him so hurt, so worried, and I felt that it was all my fault. I said, "Stop worrying, Art. We'll manage to send her her pound of flesh. We'll have to economize."

"She wouldn't be insisting," Art said, "if she didn't need it."

For the first time I spoke my mind. I said, "I doubt that."

It was the nearest we had ever come to a disagreement. I thought, "Am I becoming like so many second wives, resentful of the payments their husbands make to the first wife? Oh, heaven, help me to remain fair and unprejudiced."

We saved as much as we could and managed for a few weeks more to send Claire her alimony. We tried to break our lease, to move to a cheaper apartment, but with no success. Then we began sending just what we could afford each week—ten, or twenty, and sometimes, when Art would get work, as much as thirty dollars a week. And the letters would come from the attorney—"If you continue to disregard, etc.—action must be taken—"

THE weeks flew by, and the months, and my bank account dwindled to nothing, and my salary each week was swallowed up by expenses. Art got an occasional small job that paid him little and served only to depress him more. He was under such a constant strain of anxiety and depression that he could neither execute his work well nor favorably impress art directors.

He was too sensitive to take it in his stride and forge ahead. He was constantly worried that Claire was suffering, even though we were managing to send her often as much as twenty-five dollars a week. It hurt him bitterly to think that I must suffer because of it. That I must work and not only support him, but support his former wife. That was galling bitter medicine for him, and many nights I would lie quietly beside him while the hot tears ran down my face onto my pillow, hot tears of pity for him, because I felt myself responsible, too.

Then Claire called on me at the office. Yes, the ex-Mrs. Howell. My husband's former wife. The woman I was supporting. After she was announced, while I waited for her to come into my office, I went all to pieces. Funny how a woman whom I had never met should affect me so. And then she was standing before me, and I was suddenly calm again, appraising her coolly and critically.

She was terribly pretty, and so young and fragile and appealing. She wore a simple, black dress that a man would think cost about fifteen dollars and which I knew cost all of seventy-five.

She came to the point immediately. She said softly, with a strange, cold quality under the softness, "Miss Shafer, you *must* see that Art pays his alimony in full. I've been terribly lenient because I didn't want to have him think me—well, grasping, but I simply can't go on much longer this way. I've had to borrow. I owe money—oh, it's simply been awful. I'm sure Art will do as he promised when he knows how important it is. You *will* tell him, won't you, Miss Shafer?"

I said, "The name is Mrs. Howell, and you ought to know Art well enough to realize that he wouldn't hold out a penny on you unless it was absolutely necessary. He's broke. He's been sending you all he can spare, and more." I couldn't tell her that it was my money she was getting. I couldn't humiliate Art that way.

She said, smiling poisonously, "I'm sure you're exaggerating, Miss Shafer. You will tell Art, won't you? I'd hate to have to take steps."

She went out then, leaving me in a rage, burning with indignation at the injustice of things—that I who had worked all my life, who had had to slave for everything I got, should have to hand over my hard earned money to this pretty, useless, little female who had never done a real day's work and who probably never would.

I didn't tell Art about her visit. I couldn't add that to his worries.

Then a few weeks later the first blow fell. Poor, fragile, little Claire instituted proceedings to punish Art for contempt of court in failing to pay the alimony which the court ordered. It was a lovely little ordeal, with Art hopelessly pointing out that it was impossible for him to pay, and with Claire's attorney shrewdly pointing out that since Art's remarriage he had entered upon a higher scale of living. His client, the poor, fragile, little Claire who had no other means of support, had been deprived of the necessities of life, had been ill and unable to pay for proper medical treatment, had been forced to move into the already crowded apartment of her family.

The court, a grim-faced old gentleman of the old school, ordered that Art must continue to pay the full fifty dollars a week alimony and an additional twenty-five to make up for delinquent payments. If he should default, it would mean jail.

Isn't that screamingly funny? Fifty dollars a week wasn't bad enough, but now with twenty-five more tacked onto it each week until all the back alimony, amounting to almost nine hundred dollars, was paid up—

On our way home I said bitterly, "Let's take a taxi, Art, since we're filthy rich and live on Park Avenue and can toss away seventy-five dollars a week for alimony."

Art said, "I'm going to clear out. Why drag you through all this? You've done too much as it is. I'm a hell of an excuse for a husband."

I said, "Art, Art, don't leave me. That would be the cruelest thing you could do. I couldn't live without you. We'll pull out of this somehow."

He kissed me in a frenzy of love and fear and despair, and we clung together as if afraid to separate for a moment.

Before I left for work in the morning, Art said, "Don't feel too harsh toward Claire, Polly. She wouldn't have done that if her lawyer hadn't talked her into it. Don't worry about that jail business. She'll never allow that to happen."

I turned at the door and looked at him, while an angry impatience flashed through me. I said hotly, "The sooner you get over your delusions about little Claire, the better it will be for both of us."

That day for the first time I thought of Keith and his wealth. To ask Keith for the money to pay the back alimony, to ask Keith for a raise, to beg him to give Art work— But I couldn't. I mustn't even think of Keith—

Art and I almost went out of our minds in the next few weeks. Art almost begging for work from the agencies, trying to see Claire who refused to see him.

THEN one evening while we were at dinner, we had a caller, a big red-faced man with a humorous face. I started to shake the minute I saw him at the door because I knew, somehow.

He said, "Mr. Arthur Howell here?" I pointed with a shaking finger to Art. The man said, "I'm the sheriff, Mr. Howell. I'm sorry, but I've got to take you with me."

I screamed, although I had been expecting this for days. I clung hysterically to Art and wouldn't let him go. Art finally had to tear my hands from his neck and push me away. He was calm, now, although pale, and his eyes were wide with hurt. He said firmly, "Pull yourself together, Polly. You've been so wonderful all along. Don't let yourself go to pieces now. Listen, darling, get hold of a lawyer, tell him everything, and send him down to me. We'll see if anything can be done." He grinned wryly at me. "My address will be the alimony jail."

Then he was gone, and I wept great wracking sobs, while murderous rage boiled up in me and I thought, "If I could lay my hands on Claire, I'd tear her into bits."

The lawyer said there was nothing we could do right now, unless we could pay the alimony. Otherwise we must wait, and perhaps eventually the judge would relent if it seemed fairly certain that Art couldn't pay, and release him.

What a horribly unfair mess—to take a fine, honest, unselfish person like Art and throw him into jail for being unable to pay an exorbitant alimony. What good would it do to throw him in jail? How could he earn the money to pay the alimony there? It would just go on mounting and mounting while his hands were tied.

That's the sort of thing that makes people go out of their minds. I couldn't eat. I couldn't sleep. Nothing made sense to me anymore. I began to grow careless about my appearance. All I could think of was Art in jail, and the injustice of it.

At times I'd think, "Art is a fool. That's why he's gotten us into this mess. How could he let Claire push him around like that? And he probably still thinks she doesn't know what's going on, that it's her lawyer—"

I couldn't stand it. So one day I went into Keith's private office.

I said, "I never asked anything of you, Keith. But now I'm going to. I need money. You took Art's work away from him through petty spite. And now he's in a terrible jam. I'm asking you for a thousand dollars and for a raise in pay. You've got to give it to me." My chin went up so the tears wouldn't tumble down my cheeks.

[*Please turn to page* 73]

"STEP ALONG MISTER!"

"DON'T rush me, woman! I'm in no party mood—but I'll brighten up in a hurry if you'll share that package of Beeman's! You know that flavor's a real joy reviver. It's got a frisky freshness, a tingly tang—in short, it's great.

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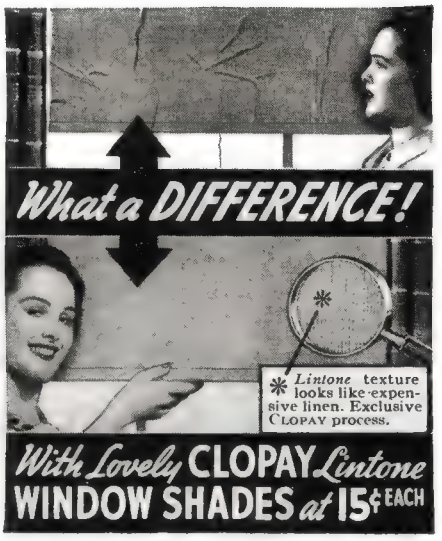

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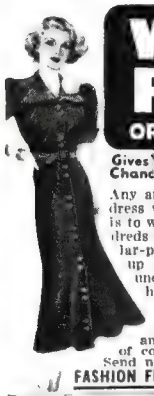

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Cookery Secrets

[*Continued from page 6*]

SKILLET MEAT LOAF

½ pound sirloin beef
¼ pound loin veal
½ pound loin pork
2 eggs
¼ cup bacon, diced
Salt
Black pepper
Celery salt
4 tablespoons butter
1 cup cream or rich milk
Mushroom catsup

Have fat and sinews removed from meats and all three meats ground together very fine. Add eggs, diced bacon, and seasonings, and mix thoroughly. Shape into a flat round loaf. Into a heavy skillet place half the butter and melt. Lay in the loaf, cover, and cook on a very low fire. Turn carefully, add more butter, and continue to cook through until all butter is absorbed. Remove cover, increase heat, and brown on both sides. Remove to hot platter. Pour cream into pan, stir, and make a rich gravy, seasoning with mushroom catsup. Pour over loaf, and serve immediately with mealy boiled potatoes (and coffee)! (Serves 4).

Brown Derby hamburger, served in hissing hot skillet at table, is a he-man dinner delight.

The next recipe shows how the hamburger mixture may be combined with pastry or biscuit dough to make very tempting pastries. By this means it is "extended" further than the original meat item would permit were it used alone. Thus, one pound of meat used alone would serve four, whereas if made into pastries six persons may be served.

HAMBURGER PASTRIES

1 pound beef, ground twice
1 tablespoon onion, minced
1 tablespoon green pepper, minced
1 teaspoon salt
⅛ teaspoon pepper
½ teaspoon Worcestershire
Flour
Milk
Tomato sauce
Rolled Pastry or Biscuit Dough

Blend meat, onion, pepper, and seasoning, thoroughly, and shape into sma'l finger sausages. Roll in flour and saute in very hot and lightly greased skillet. Cut pastry or biscuit dough into four-inch rounds, and lay a roll of meat on each. Wet edges, and press over in half, pocket-book style. Brush with milk. Bake about fifteen minutes, hot oven (450° F). Arrange on hot platter and pour around thin, highly seasoned tomato sauce. (Serves 6-8).

Another extension idea is found in the following recipe for Russian Cabbage Rolls. However, the food expert knows that these rolls are to be found also in many other countries including Scandinavia, and that this method of wrapping seasoned chopped meat in large leaves makes a most tasty dish which will go far, and with all the valuable cabbage vitamins thrown in free. Here it is:

RUSSIAN CABBAGE ROLLS

1 pound beef, ground twice
2 eggs, well beaten
Salt
Pepper
1 onion, finely minced
½ cup fresh soft bread crumbs
Gratings nutmeg
1 tablespoon flour or cornstarch
1 cup milk
Large cabbage leaves
2 tablespoons butter
1 can tomato soup

Mix together thoroughly meat, eggs, seasonings, onion, crumbs, flour, and milk, blending well. Divide mixture into about eight to ten small balls or rolls. Carefully remove large whole leaves from cabbage and drop one at a time into hot water, steaming three minutes to soften. Remove and spread on work board. In each leaf, lay meat roll, and roll up, fastening with toothpicks, if necessary. Saute rolls in hot skillet with melted butter. Add tomato sauce, cover, and simmer forty minutes. (Serves 6). (Excellent when made in an electric casserole, and may be made long in advance of serving).

IT IS surprising to find that our use of the word "hamburger" is quite recent and apparently only common to America. In England, for example, such minced beef is more frequently spoken of as "callops." And a recipe for this dish is

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included in the leaflet we hope you will send for, as a pleasing light snack or variation of the more familiar service.

If the meat balls are simmered slowly, together with gravy, they seem a very different dish than hamburger just pan-fried on a hot skillet. Another method is to place the seasoned ball in a greased muffin tin, and bake these fifteen minutes in a hot oven. In the free leaflet prepared for you, there are several such recipes, one with a hard egg concealed in the small ball.

In a great many hamburger dishes it is easy to see how important the sauce or gravy becomes, for otherwise the meat may be dry and somewhat tasteless. This is one light meat which can take it when it comes to good seasoning. Have you on your shelves a good brand of tomato catsup? Chili sauce? Mushroom catsup? Seasoning sauces, including the tried and true Worcestershire? Beef, perhaps more than some other meats, is enhanced by a judicious use of good bottled or table sauces of which there are many from which to select on the grocer's shelf. Make a point to put "sauces" on your next shopping list, and you will be surprised at the better taste of your meat dishes.

Besides pastry and bread, other extenders of the plain minced meat are cooked rice, macaroni, etc. When bread is used, it is my opinion that the preferable method is to soak the slices in cold water and then squeeze very dry (no crusts, please) before adding—with hands or stout fork, as I said previously—to the meat. Fine cracker crumbs give a slightly different texture, while rice merely blends into the mass. A few chopped nuts or seedless raisins are good, especially if the meat is lamb rather than beef.

Onions star in all hamburger dishes and there seems to be a disagreement here between experts as to whether the onions should be cooked previous to adding to the meat, or put in raw and uncooked. This individual votes for the raw onion every time, but makes the reservation that the onions be minced *fine*, and that's not maybe! Too many times the onions are merely *chopped*, and are too obvious in comparison to the meat texture. A little short saute in butter never hurts any onion, and some think this makes them more digestible. But let there be onions, even if only "on the side," as served with that "Brown Derby Hamburger" (see leaflet) whose recipe I obtained only the other day direct from Hollywood.

What meat has no waste? No gristle? No bone? Yet is 100 percent American and solid nourishment? Class, all together now: H-A-M-B-U-R-G-E-R! So don't forget to cast hamburger in your next month's Food Horoscope, and let it star in a dozen delicious dishes.

I Paid His Alimony

[*Continued from page* 71]

"Let's have dinner tonight, Polly, and we'll talk it over."

We went to the Prentiss Club for dinner and then Keith took me home. He followed me in as if there was no question about anything, and once inside took me into his arms roughly and kissed me. I submitted, passively.

He said finally, "I've been going insane with wanting to do that for a long time. You shouldn't have left me, Polly." Then he caught me to him again. "Oh, Polly, Polly, love me!"

Must I do this for Art, for the man I loved? But no! I wanted to scream. Suddenly my brain cleared and I realized with mounting horror what I had almost done. I felt like laughing crazily to think that in trying to help Art I had almost done him the greatest, most despicable wrong I could.

Then I tore away from Keith, sickened, shaking with loathing and horror. I flung myself on the couch, and wept for the first time before him, cried until my throat was dry and hurting terribly; while Keith left me and went to sit across the room in a chair.

After a long time when my sobs had quieted, he spoke to me, and his voice sounded strange. "I guess I've been a champion heel. I'll do anything you want me to do, Polly. I'll give you as much as you need to get Art out of jail. I'll give him plenty of work at the Agency. Will you try to forgive me? I guess I went off my head when you turned me down. I've been spoiled. But now—well, I want to help you."

I just lay there with my hands covering my face. I couldn't talk yet. I couldn't even hate Keith any more. I was suddenly feeling very sorry for him. He had been wrong, and he had hurt himself, too. I said finally, "All right, Keith. And when Art is earning money again we can pay you back."

As he was leaving he turned back from the door and said, "There's another thing, Polly. I suppose I should have told you before, although I don't know if it will make any difference. I found out that Art's first wife isn't all she's supposed to be. That is, she doesn't need that alimony. She's been doing some fancy lying. She's living in high style in an apartment supplied by Charles Carter, the manufacturer. He's quite married, with several grown children. A friend of his, who knows Art worked for me, told me all about it. I'll get the address tomorrow if you want it."

If I wanted it? I didn't sleep all that night. I was so impatient for the morrow. I didn't go to work, but waited for Keith's call. At two o'clock he phoned to tell me the address which was a very swank building in the East Fifties, and that Claire was using the name of Mrs. Bickley.

I DRESSED in feverish haste, and tore out of the house. When finally I stood before the door of Claire's apartment my knees were knocking together with nervousness. A snippy little maid answered my ring, and said Madame was resting, but I brushed her aside and entered. I told her to tell Madame I wanted to see her immediately. She said hotly that Madame could see no one, and then I heard Claire's voice from a room beyond calling sharply, "Who is it, Marie?" I walked on in to face my husband's first wife.

She was resting in a satin-covered easy chair, clad in a lovely turquoise house coat, a magazine in her lap, and a box of chocolates on a small table beside her chair. Her eyes flew open at sight of me.

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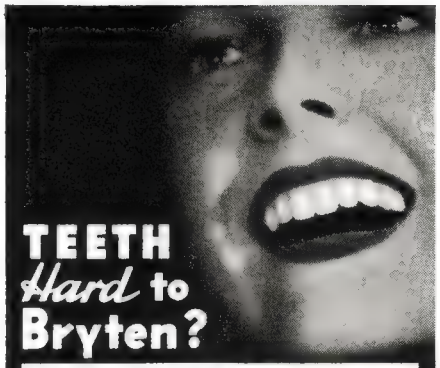
GENERAL ELECTRIC

Watch for Dr. Parker's article in the June ROMANTIC MAGAZINE



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Her soft, babyish lips pressed together tightly, but she said nothing at all.

I wanted to strike her. I was so angry I couldn't think straight. I blurted out, "Why, you lazy, lying little cheater! Lolling here in ease while Art is cooped up in jail—"

She interrupted coolly, "Since you've forced your way in, do sit down, Miss Shafer."

I said, "I don't know what your game is, but you're not getting away with it. If you don't have Art released at once, and drop all charges against him and future payments, I'll raise such a fuss that Charles Carter will wish he'd never met you. You're getting dressed and going right down to my lawyer with me and sign a few papers and whatever's necessary, or I'll have the case reopened on the grounds of newly discovered evidence. When the court finds out the truth, and that you were lying yourself blue in the face, you won't have a leg to stand on. How would you like that?"

She put the magazine aside, and even hating her as much as I did at that moment, I could admire her poise. She gave me that poisonously sweet smile. "Don't raise your voice, please. Of course I wouldn't like you to do anything rash. I'll go to your attorney with you."

Then she said coolly, "Would you mind waiting in the other room while I change, please?"

Well, that was that. Our lawyer got her to sign papers and release Art from any further obligations. Then when everything was settled and foolproof, Art was released.

What a gloriously happy moment that was. We clung to each other wordlessly. Then Art looked long into my eyes and said, "Do you have the slightest idea, my Polly, what a lucky man I am, having you for a wife?"

Oh, Art, my darling, my love, please go on thinking that forever. Don't let anything ever change your opinion of me. Even when I tell you, as some day I must, about Keith. Please go on loving me. Please go on understanding me. And with that beautiful fairness of yours, try to see my side.

I know he will understand. Just as he was understanding and forgiving when I told him about Claire. He said, "The poor kid. I guess she can't help being the way she is. I don't imagine she's really happy. You see she's not capable of real love, and that's why I'm sorry for her. Look what she's missing, my darling."

Can you understand why I'm so terribly in love with him? Why I'm ashamed now to remember the times I was annoyed at his indulgent attitude toward Claire? I'd rather a million times have him that way than cynical in his attitude toward women. Like Keith. I don't see Keith anymore. I gave up my job as soon as they got someone else to take it. Now I'm just Mrs. Arthur Howell, matron and homemaker, and really, really happy at last.

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See
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See
"LOVE AND LIFE"
By Dr. Valeria Hopkins Parker
Page 18—This Issue

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Love and Life

[*Continued from page* 18]

Posed by Sonja Henie

the marriage. In addition, you have not been willing to rush into marriage until you had reasonable financial security.

I am glad you have talked over your feeling of wanting further preparation for your life together. You are right in surmising that future happiness may be more secure if you and your fiance are able to have special advice concerning the adjustments necessary to successful marriage. Some cities have "Marriage Counsel Centers" to which young people like yourself may go for advice, but I do not know of one in the city from which you write.

I suggest, first of all, that you each go to your respective family physician and have a complete physical examination, including a Wasserman test. This is the modern method for making sure that no hidden infection can enter into your family. Discovery of infection need only mean the delay of marriage until the physician pronounces it cured. A thorough physical examination will also detect any impediment which might render the consummation of marriage or parenthood difficult. Often, a physician can adjust the difficulty. In any case he can advise you in regard to means of avoiding difficulties or danger. Good health is of great importance to successful marriage and parenthood.

In case neither of you has a physician, you may secure names of those who are qualified to give pre-marital advice through the City or County Medical Society.

A number of useful books on marriage are to be found in most public libraries. Among them are "Men, Women and God" by Gray; "The Sex Side of Marriage," Dr. M. J. Exner; "The Married Woman," by Groves and Ross.

It is especially important that you should secure a happy adjustment of the physical as well as the mental aspects of your marriage for each should bring mutual happiness. Provided you are both normal physically, patience on the part of the husband and fearless response on the part of the wife should prevent those difficult and disappointing experiences in early marriage which sometimes lead to hostile attitudes.

Try to make such wedding plans as will not leave you fatigued and irritable at the time of marriage. A simple wedding will leave more money for things you will want later. If a trip is planned, make it one which is not too filled with sightseeing or visits to friends and relatives. You will have memories of a special period in which you were free to enjoy one another in your new relationship, and this is one of the few care-free periods which life offers.

I will be glad to send a personal letter should any further question arise. May June bring joy to you and your beloved.

Valeria Hopkins Parker, M. D.

Mabel B.'s problem is quite another one. I will quote her letter:

Dear Dr. Parker:

Ever since I began to grow up I have looked forward to being eighteen, as my parents said I would then be old enough to begin going out to some of the young people's dances. I have been to two and I feel as if I never wanted to go to any more for I had hardly any invitations to dance—none with the boys I really liked.

I sat alone some of the time and tried to smile at my friends as they went by, pretending that I was interested in watching them dance, but I wasn't. There were a few more girls than boys but the same girls were never left out as I was. I stayed in the dressing room some of the time, so that no one would see I wasn't dancing. Then some girls came in and I almost cried because they acted as though they were sorry for me.

Dr. Parker, I just feel as if I didn't belong to the crowd of young people around here, although I know lots of them at school. None of the boys make dates with me for the movies or other things. It can't be because I'm not bright because I study hard and usually get high marks. Some of the most popular girls do not get good marks at all. I am not bad looking and I have plenty of nice clothes, but no one ever speaks of them.

MABEL B.

Dear Mabel:

I understand just how unhappy you are, for no one likes to be "left out." There are wall-flowers at most parties and only they themselves know what misery goes on behind a brave front.

Thoughtful hostesses at private parties should be on the lookout for just such girls and know which boys can be counted on to help in seeing that every girl has her opportunities for dancing. This is not easy if the girl is conspicuous by her homeliness, or unbecoming dress. If the girl dances awkwardly, however, the supply of partners will fail even under the eye of a solicitous hostess.

This brings me to the first point of advice. You say nothing about your dancing ability. The first thing I would do in your place would be to learn to dance exceptionally well. If there is a good teacher or a good school of dancing, persuade your parents (who seem in comfortable circumstances) to allow you to go there. Learn the art of grace and poise, rhythm, twinkling feet. There is real joy in it and an exceptionally good dancer is always in demand as a partner.

However, this is not enough. Apparently you lack ability to make friends easily. If you have a genuine liking for other people, you can see good points in the least attractive ones and can make people see that you really like them. They usually respond by liking you! Stop thinking about yourself and think about the others when you are with them. Do some unexpected, thoughtful, kindness for some girl whose popularity you envy. Make other girls like you, learn to feel at ease in laughing and chatting with them, and they will soon draw you into their circle. If you learn to play tennis really well, the best boy players will want to play a match with you, and see if they can beat you.

It is a splendid thing that you get good marks at school—but perhaps you could continue this and yet take your

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FARR'S FOR GRAY HAIR

studies less seriously. "All work and no play" makes life dull.

When you are with boys, try to forget any self-consciousness you may feel by showing your interest in things which interest them.

Perhaps, instead of hiding your unhappiness from your mother, you could courageously take her into your confidence and tell her how much you want to join in good times with others of your own age. She might help you give a carefully planned party which would afford you the pleasure of extending hospitality to those you want to know better.

You say you have plenty of nice dresses. Spend some time in studying your appearance. Is there any "primness" about face, hair, or clothing? If so, get rid of it. Get someone to help you if you can and cultivate the style of dress, cut of hair, and well selected "make-up" which will best suit your personality and make you thoroughly charming and so satisfied with yourself that you'll "break into" the crowd—and when you are in, don't forget the other wall-flowers.

Valeria Hopkins Parker, M. D.

Doris W. thinks other girls may be facing her problem.

Dear Dr. Parker:

I am twenty-two years old and have been engaged for three years to a fine young man who is studying medicine. We went to high school together and there became interested in each other. We love each other very much and our families approve of our engagement, but it will be at least six or seven years before we can hope to marry, if we wait until my fiance has finished his studies and interneship, and has become established. Each time we see each other we become more discouraged in facing the long wait ahead.

My problem now is this: When my fiance and I were together during the Christmas holidays, he told me that if I really loved him, I would be willing to give myself to him completely. He thinks that such a relationship should only concern ourselves and would be a supreme evidence of my love for him. When I told him that I could not bring myself to feel as he does, even though I love him, he said that my complete surrender was the only way in which he could avoid the temptation of having physical relationships with women he does not love.

I do not want to lose my sweetheart and I am ready to risk my own happiness if it will add to his, but even though conventions are changing, I have not been able to feel that the thing asked of me will bring him happiness. Can you suggest a way out? I am so worried that I cannot keep my mind on my work and it is important that I should not lose my position, for I am self-supporting. I am sure that many other girls are facing the same situation as mine and that in helping me, you can help them.

DORIS W.

Dear Doris:

Your problem is one with which many young lovers are confronted under the prolonged economic depression. If your romance is to be a success, it is important that you should understand all of the risks involved in meeting the natural longing of your lover, to break the emotional tension caused by the long engagement period which seems to stretch out before you. However, the solution which

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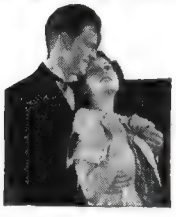

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SEE PAGE 18— THIS ISSUE

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he seeks is one which cannot bring satisfaction and which may indeed destroy the love you now have for each other.

A clandestine relationship is necessarily fraught with fear of discovery and danger of pregnancy, since the most scientific methods of birth control fail in two per cent of all cases. Opportunity for security in physical, mental, and spiritual fields is found only in marriage. Secret relationships frequently bring about mutual distrust with final destruction of love itself.

Should your lover follow out his threat to indulge in physical relationships with women whom he does not love, he will find only superficial relief from his physical longing and gain no permanent satisfaction. More than this, he will run the risk of those serious infections spread mainly by women who are willing to give or sell themselves in promiscuous, physical relationships. Such infections are common and can be cured only by long and skilful medical treatment.

My advice would be to plan for marriage at once. This could easily be arranged since you have a position and your fiance evidently has support provided for during his years of study.

If you decide to marry, talk your problem over with your physician. Both husband and wife should look forward to having children as soon as the financial situation permits. It is well to start a "baby fund" from the time of marriage, putting into it a weekly amount no matter how small. In no emergency should money be borrowed from this fund for it will grow steadily and in time be a most welcome and practical aid in planning for the possibility of a most important experience to those who love—that of parenthood.

Another suggestion I would make is that you and your fiance talk frankly with the members of your respective families about your desire to take up life, together. It may be that they are able to assist you in bringing this about. Certainly they would stand against the solution to your problem suggested by your fiance!

I can never forget the grief of four parents hastening from a small town to a city hospital in which the beloved son of one family and the daughter of the other had just died. The young people had been engaged for some years, and becoming discouraged as to the possibility of marriage, had seized upon the comfort and happiness of physical union, with their mutual love as sole security. When an unwanted and unplanned for child was on the way, the young lovers "lost their heads." The young woman died of blood poisoning following an illegal abortion; the boy committed suicide because of his grief. How gladly those four parents would have helped in marriage plans had they known of the tragic alternative of life-long grief.

I fully understand your dilemma, Doris, but I urge you not to yield to the pressure of your fiance. If you can help him to see the wisdom of planning for early marriage, the prospect of permanent happiness is far more sure.

Valeria Hopkins Parker, M. D.

Because of the nation-wide interest in the prevalence and possibility of cure of the infections which especially affect family life and parenthood, the "Love and Life" department in the June issue of ROMANTIC MAGAZINE will tell what the infections are, where to look for medical help in curing them, and how they may be avoided. Don't miss this important discussion!

Runaway Romance

[*Continued from page* 35]

seemed wonderful. Hadn't he given me a home at last?

I was to continue at High. I could bring friends home, I thought, and go to movies and maybe even dances. "And I'll be a lady," Cora said laughingly. "Gee it's swell, just to keep house, and to have you, Kid!"

It was swell. But not for long. You can't take a woman who has spent sixteen years in one-arm lunch rooms, and make a prisoner of her. Ralph Hanson tried to. He opened charge accounts at the butchers, and at the grocers, but he never gave Cora any cash, and nothing for clothing or cosmetics or any of the things a pretty woman wants.

"Because," he told her, "you're not doing any primping for some young fellow. Understand?"

"Sure!" she said. "It's the same as it always was. I have to look out for myself."

She did. She went back to Harvey's Handy Grille, and two years later, when I finished High, she got me in, too. I hated it. I spent my time in my own private dream-world. I let my imagination picture the wonderful man who'd come along and take me away from all this. I wanted laughter and tenderness and romance. There'd been so pitifully little.

And when you get to feeling that way—sorry for yourself—you're in danger of grabbing at the first hint of romance that appears. With me it was cross-country trucking.

Night after night, truckers came into the Grille. I listened avidly to their tiniest word, as I served them endless "scuttles of mud" and the eternal "ham and—"

Mother warned me against them. "They're like sailors," she said. "A sweetheart at every stop! Don't fall for them, Kid. You'd only get in trouble."

Well, girls do fall for sailors. And for aviators. And for truckers, too. Men who have stories to tell. Men who mention casually names like Miami, and New York, and Montreal. Men who cross state lines with as much unconcern as a motorman crosses the streets of his route.

Then, too, there was that piquant flavor of danger that intrigued me. I'd thrill under that hard shell I'd learned to wear, when they'd talk about hi-jacking, taking chances on unsafe bridges to get perishable cargoes through, and the biggest hazard of all—the constant danger of carbon monoxide, seeping into the cab and putting the driver to sleep. That explained their endless "scuttles of mud."

But, serving them, I gave no hint of those nights in my narrow bed, with the shrill voice of my mother, and the surly voice of my stepfather dinning at me, when I'd dream of plunging through the night in a snug cab, carrying a fabulous cargo of shimmering silks or furs in the great trailer behind.

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I wanted to get out of this Maryland town, away from the home that wasn't a home. I wanted to ride over the mountain roads and see these great dream cities. And then, maybe, I might have a home of my own some day, with a shining coffee pot always waiting for a someone I'd love.

Oh, yes. For all its modern trappings, it was the old Prince Charming dream every young girl has. But I hid it under the shell mother had coached me to wear, till Harold Beller came. Then the shell cracked.

Not right away. Oh, it did, but I managed to hide it. Or thought I did. Maybe those dark eyes of Harold's with their constantly changing lights saw through me right from the beginning. Maybe that's why he kept coming back after that first February night when he threw off his fleece-lined wind-breaker and said, "Holy Pete! Do you look nice and warm, after fighting this sleet! Gee, Babe, with you in the cab I'd never get cold!"

Fresh? Fresher than most of them. And I dripped icicles saying, "Give me your order. And lay off the wise stuff, big boy!"

But I wasn't icy underneath. An odd breathlessness that was very warming, made me splash coffee into the saucer when I put it before Harold Beller. I daren't look into his eyes, because he might see how his crack had struck home.

"—with you in the cab—"

It was my dream, put into words for the first time. The effect was frightening. I never dreamed that tall, lean body, and hair that lay in smooth dark ripples, and an easy quick grin could make a girl's heart thump so hard.

"Red hair and green eyes!" he said when I brought him his check. "Boy! carbon monoxide would never put me to sleep with you in the cab!"

I said, "Don't worry! Hang onto your sleeping powders!" and turned swiftly away. Too swiftly. I heard Harold's soft laugh, glimpsed his amused eyes in the mirror, as he picked up his change. It was relief to see him go.

But he didn't go out of my mind. Somehow, now, my dreams aways included a tall man with dark eyes. I couldn't tell whether those eyes were laughing at me or liking me. But I couldn't forget.

He came back the next week and the next. And always there was that funny plunge inside me when I'd see him. I tried to keep up the flippant front, and I guess I'd have succeeded if mother hadn't said, "Not going overboard for that smooth job that just left, are you? I want you to be careful, Gladys."

CAREFUL! That was a laugh! I knew mother had a date with some man after closing time. Something hot flashed through me. Why shouldn't I have some fun? Harold had said, "It slays me to think of something gorgeous like you hanging around a tank-town like this, when you could be hitting the high spots in New York!"

Just a line, I tried to tell myself. But a line I couldn't get out of my head, hard as I tried. Now, in my swift rebellion against mother, I didn't try any more.

The next time he came, the plunge was harder than before. Mother was out with a cold. There was no one to watch when Harold said, "Well, gorgeous! Made up your mind to quit this tank-town, yet?"

"I'm considering," I laughed, hoping the mad beating of my heart couldn't be heard. Then quickly, "What's it for you tonight?"

"*You!*" he said. And he said it so seri-

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ously, without a trace of laughter, that my knees went watery. His hand covered mine. It was a shock.

"I'm not kidding, honest!" he said, while I just stared at him, trying to still these crazy new sensations "I've got it bad, Gladys! Won't you give me a break and meet me after you close up?"

"Well—" Then quickly, "In an hour?"

This was my first date, if you discount the few blind dates I'd had during high school days. Remember your first date? How you choked up and couldn't talk? How you wondered if your lips were on straight, then what kind of an impression you were making? Then you decided frantically that you weren't going over, and you started to babble crazily?

It usually happens around sixteen, I suppose. I was nineteen. Cora had been clamping down on all suggestions of dates. So I had all the sixteen-year-old sensations when I met Harold around the corner from the Grille.

I had hoped he would take me to the Garden or the Arcadia, the only two night spots in town—then, meeting him, I realized how silly that was. Harold was wearing his fleece-lined windbreaker, of course. So I was too confused to protest when he said, "Never saw my truck, did you Gladys? Look her over. She's as sweet a ten-wheel job as hits the road."

It was a mammoth thing that gleamed like rubbed silver. And her cab was big and frighteningly intimate. Harold showed me the bunk, high behind the driver's head, and told me about the thousands of dollars worth of silks locked in the trailer. Then he explained the truck's five-speed-forward, and about double-clutching her on the hills.

It was still a mystery to me, after it was explained. But it built Harold up as a sort of superman—that very mystery. For I was wondering how a man who could manage a huge truck like this would manage a woman. How a man of his strength would kiss?

As if he read my thoughts, Harold clicked off the dashboard lights. Then I was in his arms. I tried to edge away. I couldn't. For the thrill of the moment held me. A thrill that brought my breath in quick, harsh gasps and made my heart pound unendurably.

For that brief moment when my hand pressed against his chest, I was remembering mother's warning against truckers. Then Harold's breath was warm on my cheek, and his voice was pleading, "Gladys—darling, Gladys—I've been waiting so long for this!"

And hadn't I, I thought rebelliously? My hand went limp, and I closed my eyes against this kiss that went throbbing through me. I couldn't fight this thing that was like fire, consuming me. I could just press closer to Harold, till he said exultantly, "Gladys, you'll be mine, now, won't you?"

His? Oh, I wanted to be! For keeps. But I struggled weakly away, telling myself it was madness to listen to his plea to come to New York with him.

"You'll come next week, honey," he whispered. And at my scared, "No!" he laughed. "Oh, yes you will! And I'll show you how pretty spring looks in the mountains. And then I'll show you Times Square when they turn on the lights! Gee, a girl like you doesn't have to work all night in one-arm joints and take gab from a lot of roughnecks! In the big-town you could land in some swell leather-upholstered joint, selling cigarettes, or just hostessing!"

It sounded wonderful, but frightening, too. I kept saying, "I couldn't Harold! *Couldn't!*"

But his last words before he left were, "Have your bags packed! You're pushing off next Wednesday!"

IN MY own room, I told myself I wouldn't go away with any man unless I was to marry him—that there certainly wouldn't be any bags packed.

Yet they were, when he came the following Wednesday. The rumpus the night before had decided it. Cora and Ralph had a fight that wasn't like the other spats. Both of them had been drinking. Ralph actually hit mother, after she threw a glass at him. Then she screamed till the landlady came pounding on the door and told her to keep quiet and to vacate in the morning.

I decided to vacate, too!

It was absurdly easy to get away. Cora was out that night. She was hunting for new quarters. Bitterly, I thought, "I can't stand this life any longer. Surely Harold means to marry me, once we get to New York. I'll go with him."

When I slipped into the cab of the great truck, I forgot everything, but the man beside me. The night had the softness of early spring. Its romance went singing through my veins, as I leaned close to Harold's warm leanness. It was enchantment. Enchantment that snapped sharply when Harold said, "Gee, I wish we were to be alone the whole trip!"

"Aren't we?" I asked dazedly.

"No. My partner's waiting for me at the trucker's rest, just the other side of Holtown!"

"Oh—" Harold caught my hand when my cry of disappointment slipped out. I felt cheated, somehow, that I'd have just these few miles with him, alone. Automatically, my hand tightened on his, and I moved closer to him.

The speed of the great truck slackened as Harold said, "I'm ahead of schedule, Gladys. Shall we stop and have a cup of coffee?"

"Yes," I whispered.

He pulled into a rustic roadstand, a regular stop, I supposed, since the proprietor said, "Hyah, Harold! How's going?" then led us to a back room, where a pot-bellied stove threw off welcome heat. Then he brought our coffee and shut the door firmly after him. Harold and I just looked at each other. But a look can mean a lot.

"Gladys—" Harold took me in his arms. "Am I looking after you from now on?"

"Yes, Harold!" And I seemed to melt then, for Harold's lips were warm and demanding on mine, and he was asking if I loved him, and I was saying, "Yes!" And I meant it.

Wasn't this love, this lashing gale that was bending me? Wasn't it love that would care for me, keep me safe forever? Oh, I thought so! Or did I think? It seemed beautiful, to me, and inevitable. I had cut my bridges behind me. I had only Harold to rely on, I thought, as I answered his kiss.

I didn't feel like Gladys Milner, who had been raised in an orphanage when I sat again in the cab beside Harold. I felt beautifully cared for. Harold had said he loved me, hadn't he? And love meant shoes, side by side, and a pay envelope divided, and maybe later, kids. This was our honeymoon. I hated sharing it with this partner of his we were pulling in to meet at the trucker's rest.

Hated it?

I didn't know what I was in for when Buss Waters stalked out, big and blond

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and grinning. He looked nice enough, with those frank blue eyes of his, and the homely splattering of freckles across his slightly pug nose. But he sent all my hopes aglimmering when he saw me, and that grin changed to a scowl.

"You ought to be shot, Harold!" he growled. "Didn't I tell you to lay off women? On a night like this—" And while I stared at him, the hope in me changing to something bleak, he said gruffly, "Okay, sister. We can't drop you in this wilderness. Pile up in the bunk there and grab some sleep. We'll drop you in Harrisburg, when we make a delivery."

"But, I—" I had to swallow hard before that tiny voice could go on. *"Lay off women!"* Oh, it ran through me in sickening chills, the knowledge that I wasn't the first girl Harold had taken along, that all these emotions that seemed so shining, new, and precious to me were just shoddy repetitions of something known before to Harold.

"You—you can't leave me off at Harrisburg," I said dully. "Harold promised to take me to New York."

"Oh, yeah!" Buss' laugh was short. "Well, did Harold happen to tell you that this is my truck, and that I just lease it to the trucking company? And that I'm responsible for their trailer? Listen, sister, with the snow melting and the slides starting in the mountains, I'm not complicating things with female riders. Get back in that bunk!"

TREMBLING, I obeyed. Hatred ripped through me for this man, who with a few careless words, smashed my bright, shining bubble, and then ordered me around like a small child. "But it isn't so!" I told myself. "Even if there were other girls, Harold loves me. He must!"

Pulling out, I heard Harold say, "Aw, give the kid a break, Buss! I told her I'd look out for her till we hit New York!"

Only to New York? He didn't mean to marry me? I thought my spirits had hit bottom then, but that was before Buss said, "Kind, ain't you? That wife and kid of yours down in Virginia should be enough to look out for! Listen, Harold—if you don't leave women alone—"

"Wife and kid—" I went numb, like the time my ears were frost-bitten. It was uncomfortable in the bunk, with the speedometer showing sixty. I was bounced around like a leaf in the wind. I hardly felt it. For all feeling, all life seemed drained from me.

Dimly I heard Buss say he was worried; that it looked like rain coming on, and what with the slides already starting, we might be shooting into trouble. But I couldn't worry about that. An earthquake, an erupting volcano would seem unimportant after what had happened to me!

It was cold, plunging through the mountains. My light coat was useless against the raw chill, eating into my bones. But that wasn't the chill that kept me shivering and sniffling, though Buss Waters thought it was, I suppose.

We had just passed over the Pennsylvania border when he pulled to the side of the road and called back to me, "You'll freeze, girlie in that fool outfit. Here—" He pulled off his windbreaker, dragged a pair of red-topped hunting socks from a pocket in the cab, and said gruffly, "Put these on. Maybe you'll stop that fool shivering then."

Grudgingly grateful, I slipped into them. But they didn't ease that inner chill. I lay there, stiff and numb, watching the road unwind before us in the triangular

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yellow arc of the headlights. Funny, when everything in you seems dead, how you'll pay attention to little things? I read the road signs—"Slippery in wet weather." "Dangerous Hill—Trucks go in second gear."—"Beware of slides." I could feel the ponderous trailer sway behind us, as we'd take a steep curve. The tires sung steadily. The motor's hum echoed the dirge in my heart. On, on, monotonously on.

Then it came! I saw it, I think, at the same moment Buss did, that thing that sprawled across the road. It choked a cry from me and from him. It brought me sitting up abruptly, whacking my head against the ceiling, just as the brakes squealed, as the trailer gave that sickening lurch.

I watched Buss, half-standing, battling that wheel for control. I saw his fingers go white with strain. And I saw, beyond the shoulder at the left of the road the flimsy-looking white fence and the hundred-foot drop beyond. Burning rubber was acrid in my nose. I felt the gigantic thing behind skid crazily. Pebbles from the road's shoulder splattered against the fenders. But we were out of the skid. The great truck stopped, shuddering like a tortured thing, within a few feet of the huge boulder with its mass of smaller rocks and gravel that blocked the road.

In the dim light, sweat glistened on the men's faces. I knew we had just escaped a horrible death. Yet Buss' voice was calm enough saying, "Okay, Harold! We'll have to back her to a clearing. We can't pass that."

Harold hopped out, shouting directions for backing, as Buss coaxed the cumbersome trailer backwards. Even I, little as I knew about driving, could understand the toughness of the job. Then, to complicate things, rain started. Heavy, driving rain, that turned in a few moments to hail.

Much as I hated this domineering Buss Waters, I had to admire his sureness. Watching the clean angles of his jaw, the steadiness of his big hands on the wheel, and the clear blue eyes reflected in the driving mirror, I knew he could handle almost any situation. You felt safe in his hands.

Outside, Harold was yelling frantic directions. He complained that the hail was like pebbles, socking him. It did look mean. But I knew if Buss were to change places with him, there would be no complaints.

WE MUST have been an hour at the clearing, turning that great thing that buckled clumsily. Before Buss finally managed to turn it about, it swung into a dangerous jack knife. Harold complained sullenly. I thought, "If only I'd waited, I'd have seen what kind of a man he is. He just can't take it. He's the same with his wife, and I was fool enough—"

Yes, when there were men like Buss Waters around, strong and reliable, I ruined my chances with them forever, going off with an imitation man, I thought wearily, when they finally got the truck moving again. I'd ruined myself for any man, tonight. Fool! Fool!

Despite the treacherous hail, Buss was stepping on it, hitting for the back road that would join the main highway again. I heard him say, "We'll have to chance that bridge, even if it is a little flimsy."

I thought, "I'd just as well die tonight." Then I shook myself! Harold had a wife and a kid waiting. Buss had everything to live for!

For their sakes, I was grateful that the bridge just wasn't, when we got there. It had been washed away by spring floods, the signs warned us.

"We'll just have to park at Cooper's roadstand, then, till they clear the road," Buss said. "Let them raise hell about this shipment not getting through!"

Cooper's was just across the Pennsylvania border. It wasn't much of a place, but it was warm, and there was hot strong coffee, and a radio to bring cheer.

It wasn't much help, though. I felt too awful. Harold was dozing. Watching his mouth slacken, I wondered what I had seen in him a few hours back.

The commercial stations signed off the radio, and Buss turned on the police reports. "That's something, anyhow!" he said. And then he perched up on the table and looked at me. Really looked at me, I mean, as if he were seeing me for the first time as a living human being.

I went red, I think, under his frank scrutiny.

"Say—" He sounded surprised. "You're just a kid, aren't you?"

He grinned. I grinned back. I hadn't meant to. But with those blue eyes of his crinkling, he looked like a big nice clean boy. So nice and clean that tears stung my eyes. He was the kind of a person I'd have met if I hadn't been such a fool over Harold Beller. I turned my head. My hand went to my chest. There was a bleak, hurting emptiness there.

"Whoa, there, youngster!"

Buss was leaning over me, his big handkerchief mopping up my tears. "You poor kid," he said in a low, kind voice. "You're new to this kind of thing, aren't you?"

And I don't know why I told him about it then, the whole nasty mess. The words just tumbled out, while he sat there, so quiet, so—well, comforting, and the police reports came droning over the radio.

I even told him that half-formulated dream about a home of my own, where the coffee would be waiting for Harold to come home. It brought a sort of sad smile to Buss's face, and his voice sounded husky saying, "It sounds something like a dream I had once, too."

I don't know just how it happened. His hand touched mine. It was so swift, so startling, that thing we both felt, that for the moment we just stared at each other, hypnotized.

I broke away first, I think. That hour with Harold was a pain, shooting through me. And Buss must have remembered, too. For his face went brick red, and without a word, he sat down to his cold coffee, and gulped.

I had a crazy impulse to run out into the night. Away from that touch that still burned me. Away from the room that was squeezing us all together. From this empty nothingness in my chest, and from that droning radio voice.

THEN something plunged in me. The voice was saying my name! "Mrs. Ralph Hanson reports the disappearance of her daughter, Gladys Melner. Gladys is nineteen, red hair, grey-green eyes, five feet four, one hundred and fifteen pounds —wearing brown coat, green hat. Mother fears she left Bellemount, Maryland, in long-distance truck. Destination unknown. Hold driver. Repeat—"

Buss was staring at me solemnly. "You know what that means," he said quietly, watching the fingers that went to my lips to stop their quiver, the fear that must be plain in my eyes. He half smiled at me, as if to say, "Take it easy," then his jaw stiffened and he glared at Harold.

"Wake up, you clown!" he gritted, shak-

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ing him vigorously. Then when Harold stared at him groggily, Buss explained the jam. "The Mann Act's hanging over your head!" he finished, curtly.

I never saw anyone go to pieces like Harold did. His skin looked green under its tan, and his voice was just a thread, whimpering, "Edna—Edna, will die if she hears! And little Hal! What can I do?"

"Kind of late to worry about that now, isn't it?" Buss asked.

Then we were all tense again, listening to the voice. It was asking Maryland and Pennsylvania police to join in the search for me. "Gladys Milner reported to be in truck headed for New York. Driver reported to be tall, dark, approximately twenty-six years old. Hold driver—"

"I—I—" Harold moistened his lips. And terrified as I was, I couldn't help feeling sorry for him. He looked so suddenly old and broken saying, "Edna's back there, waiting for me, believing in me—"

Buss said, "Yeah. And she's as swell a wife as a man could want." Then, looking at me, his lips went tight together and he said bitterly to Harold, "And what about this poor kid? It's going to be sweet for her, isn't it, after the papers get through with her tomorrow? Well—" He looked at me, with that half-smile on his lips, and a crease between his eyes, and it was crazy, I knew—but I wanted to rush into his arms! I felt if he'd just hold me, nothing could happen. He seemed so reliable—so safe.

He took a deep breath, then his voice was businesslike saying, "Harold, we've been partners a long time. And I think a lot of your wife. I'll see what I can do."

What could anyone do, I wondered dully, while Buss was in the front talking to the proprietor? Then, when he came back, looking so grim and determined, he said, "Listen, Gladys, are you game?" I nodded.

"Okay," he said. "Pete here—" he nodded to the gaping proprietor—"says we can borrow his flivver. It will get through the road to Elmton, even if the truck can't. Game to do it, Gladys? Straighten this thing out?"

My breath went in one great puff, and I could just sit there and stare at this man who was so casually inviting me to Elmton. Elmton means marriage. Quick, quiet marriage, with few questions asked.

"Well?" Buss asked impatiently. "Are you game? You're only nineteen, aren't you? We can get this marriage annulled later!"

What did it matter? It was an out for Harold —for his Edna, who was waiting and believeing back in Virginia. An out—that's all. Maybe just a little repayment for the wrong I'd done with Harold tonight. So it didn't matter, when a tired-looking man married a dazed girl to a grim-faced stranger.

NOTHING much mattered, except weariness, and a heart that seemed a dead weight within me. Dawn was beginning to pierce the darkness when we left that small frame house and the Justice who called, "Now take good care of her, young fellow!"

"Okay," Buss called back. And for a moment my heart lived again, for he was staring down at me, tenderly, it seemed, and he was saying, "Poor kid—you're tired, aren't you?"

Then he was putting me in the flivver, and wrapping a blanket around me, and saying, "Look, Gladys, if you lean against my shoulder, maybe you can grab some sleep."

It was a nice shoulder, big and comforting. My husband's, I thought, fingering the signet ring that had served for a wedding ring. Then I laughed, because I mustn't cry. I'd have to be "game" and annul this husband, who already was ignoring me, and driving like fury to get back to the all-night eatery and his truck.

I must have dozed. For I was imagining I was in a neat little kitchen, brewing coffee for this big husband with the very fair hair and the blue eyes. It seemed so real, I could smell the coffee, and the geranium on the sill. Then he came home and he held me tenderly, saying, "Little wife—so sweet and little—" and then I knew the precious security of his arms. It was so sweet, clinging to him, knowing his lips were hungry for mine—Sweet, sweet, to kiss my own husband—

There was fervor in that kiss. And tenderness, too. It seemed to go to the very core of me, in a wild, seething fury. Yet, it seemed right. And real.

Then I seemed to smother. This kiss was real! We were still in the flivver, and the early morning sun was bright and Buss was holding me close to him, and his lips were warm, demanding—like my lips. Was it my eyes, so awed, staring into his, that suddenly made him pull away? Perhaps. The shining countryside, washed so clean by last night's rains, went suddenly bleak, when Buss said through stiff lips, "I'm sorry. I—I didn't mean to do that."

I crumpled back in the warm seat. Of course. Hadn't he just married me to save another marriage from snuffing out? I made my quivering lips say, "It's all right, Buss!" And I made myself smile, while his blue eyes darted over my face, and his mouth opened, then closed again without saying anything.

"Hadn't we better get going?" I asked, when I couldn't stand his staring any longer.

"Yes," he said, and he went very straight, and threw the car into gear. I edged far as I could from him, and kept my eyes straight ahead. He mustn't know—ever—what that kiss had done to me. He mustn't know how it pained to let him go. That was the least pay I could give him.

I managed pretty well, I think, when we said good-bye. I held out my hand and said, "You've been swell, Buss. No use trying to say thank you."

His eyes dropped. He stared at his cap, and he looked tired saying, "You've been swell yourself, Gladys. You—" He broke off. Then, "Well, take care of yourself. Maybe I'll be seeing you next week, after I get the dope on this annulment business."

Then he was gone.

The proprietor of the stand, Pete Cooper, looked at me curiously. "None of my business," he said at last, "but it sure seems a funny way to get married! Rushing off in the middle of the night, then rushing back, and your husband coming, asking me if I can give his wife a job."

He picked up two empty cups and carrying them to the sink he said, "Well, it's a break for me, anyhow! I need an experienced waitress. How about a cup of Java, Mrs. Waters? You look all in."

I was all in. But it was that "Mrs. Waters" that brought the laugh, shrill and off key, that made Pete Cooper say anxiously, "Sure you're all right?"

"Sure," I said.

Sure—except that my name was Mrs. Norton Waters now, and that I had ended just where I had started—slinging hash in a one-armed joint for a bunch of truckers!

Well, I had a job to do, so I couldn't afford the weeps. And I think I understood, in that moment, how mother had gone hard that day when the telegram came. And that reminded me—there was that telegram to send her. I told her I was married and—yes, happy. No use worrying her, yet.

IT WAS a bad week. Mother's letter came, scolding, but kind underneath. "I'm anxious to meet this trucker husband of yours," she wrote. "And if he doesn't treat you better than a lot of these fellows do their wives, I tell you, Gladys, I'll—"

There were a lot of things she threatened to do, but I couldn't read for the tears blinding me. Buss Waters wasn't like these others. He'd be grand to a wife. "Remember," I told myself, "you're not his wife, really, so forget him!"

It's hard to forget.

It was one of those quiet nights, when his truck pulled in. He was back. Buss! And all I could say was, "Hello. You want coffee?"

"Yeah, sure," he said, and he sounded gruff. He didn't look at me. I couldn't stop looking at him, even when I was drawing coffee from the big urn. I wanted to see every curly eyelash, every freckle, every light in those blue eyes.

My hands were shaking so, the scalding coffee splashed over and ran down my fingers. I hardly felt it, I was burning so inside. But Buss saw it. He made a little *"Oh!"* sound, and then he picked up a pat of butter and smeared it over the burn.

"Thanks," I said. "You—you're very kind."

"Kind?" He looked at me then, and grinned. He was still holding my hand. "Do I look like a guy who'd beat his wife?"

It was supposed to be funny. But it did something tremendous to us both. Our eyes clung, and our hands lingered.

"Gladys," Buss' hand tightened on mine. "You wouldn't take a crack at it, would you? That kitchen, you were talking about, and the coffee waiting?"

I went so limp I had to sit down. And I had to pull my hand from his when I said, "Don't, Buss! Please. It's too—*beautiful!* Don't joke!"

"I'm not joking, Gladys." He fingered the signet ring, and smiled at me shyly. "You see, I keep remembering this.'

I fought down the longing to go in to his arms. I made myself say, "Buss—you know what I was. You know about Harold, and about my mother, and—"

"I think I know about you, too," he said gravely. Then just as gravely, he took me in his arms, and when he kissed me I learned what "cherish" means. "That's how I feel," he said. "This is a tough business, Gladys, and we need tough little wives who don't crack up at the first strain. You're game. You took your trouncing without a whimper. If—if you can take the chance on a husband that you only see a couple of times a week—if you'd keep that pot of coffee brewing—"

"Buss—" I could just gasp his name, and he was oddly choked, too, saying, "Gladys, darling—I'm crazy mad in love with you! Won't you give me a chance?"

"Chance—oh, darling, when I love you so—"

So the coffee brews now, and I've vowed I'll always be "game" with this grand husband of mine! What if I have him only a few days a week? Those days are so sweet! I think even mother is convinced that there is something to this "love business." She cried when she came down and saw Buss and me together.

"Stick to him, Kid!" she said.

As if I'd do anything else, when I've a home—a real home—at last!

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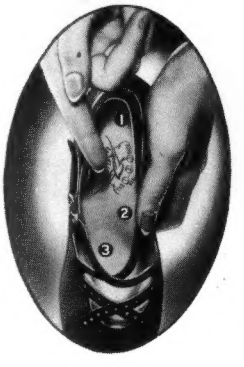

Rhythm STEP
THE 1...2...3 SHOE
REGISTERED U.S. PAT. OFF.

"I've never found shoes so light and dainty with such a gloriously buoyant feeling" . . . says Betty Grable. "They take the tiring strain out of dancing . . . and walking, too . . . and the styles are as youthful and cute as a co-ed. That's why I chose Rhythm Step shoes for the 'College Swing.' They do make such a wonderful difference in comfort!"

BETTY GRABLE FAVORITES
. . . airy styles with *extra support!*

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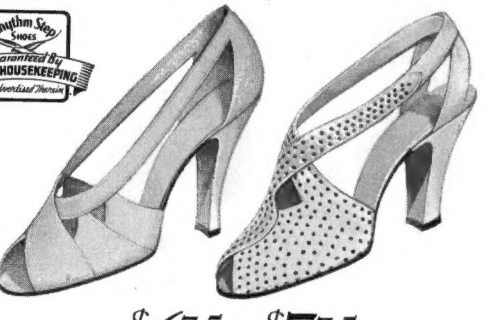

$6.75 to $7.75
Slightly Higher West of the Rockies

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